How Three HBCUs Drive Student Success Through Digital Learning and Innovation

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Suggested Citation

Executive Summary

This case study explores the **digital learning** motivations of three historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as they strive to expand educational access for student academic success. The institutions—Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina; Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, North Carolina; and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia—were originally part of a cohort of six HBCUs funded through the **Frontier Set** initiative,[1] a Gates program focused on institutional transformation.[2] This initiative utilized a framework centered on three key solution areas to examine student success strategies: **advising**, **digital learning**, and **developmental education**.

Now, three years after the conclusion of the **Frontier Set**, this study revisits Claflin, Fayetteville State, and Morehouse to examine how they have sustained and built upon their progress over ten years. By leveraging three strategic approaches—**student-centered success**, **structural student success**, and **broadening student success**—these institutions continue to drive innovation and digital learning access, ensuring long-term student success.[3]

- **Claflin University (CU)**, affiliated with the United Methodist Church, is the oldest HBCU in South Carolina. The university's motto, "The World Needs Visionaries," reflects its commitment to developing forward-thinking leaders. In fall 2023, Claflin University had an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 1,754 students. The 40-acre urban campus fosters a close-knit community with a student-to-faculty ratio of 14:1, allowing for personalized attention and mentorship.[4]

- **Fayetteville State University (FSU)** is the second-oldest state-supported institution in North Carolina and a constituent of the University of North Carolina System. In fall 2023, FSU achieved a record-breaking enrollment of approximately 6,847, with 5,845 undergraduates and 1,002 graduate students. The university is renowned for its commitment to adult learners and military-affiliated students, with adult learners comprising 60% of the student body and military-affiliated[5] students making up 25%.

- **Morehouse College (MHC)** is the nation's only historically Black college dedicated exclusively to educating men. In fall 2023, Morehouse had an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,738 students. The 61-acre urban campus fosters a vibrant community emphasizing leadership, service, and intellectual engagement.[6]

A Snapshot of the Findings Across the Three HBCUs

Digital Learning

Over the past ten years, a successful institutional transformation has occurred through the adoption of digital learning technologies and practices, resulting in increased engagement and access.

Student-Centered

Each institution's consistent approach to student-centered strategies has led to inclusive and targeted support systems, improving learning outcomes for underrepresented students.

Leadership

Leadership was pivotal in driving digital learning initiatives and fostering innovation and continuous improvement.

Introduction

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have long been at the forefront of student success, leveraging innovative strategies and a deep commitment to an accessible learning environment in higher education. As these institutions navigate the evolving digital learning landscape, they continue implementing transformative approaches that support students academically, financially, and socially. This case study examines how three HBCUs—**Claflin University, Fayetteville State University, and Morehouse College**—are leading efforts to enhance digital learning by integrating the strategies of **Student-Centered Success, Structural Student Success, and Broadening Student Success** into their institutional educational access and success strategies. These themes emerged from the Frontier Set initiative, a multi-year effort to identify, scale, and sustain effective student success strategies across higher education. As part of this initiative, a cohort of six HBCUs collaborated to develop and refine these three core approaches, leveraging data-driven insights and institutional best practices to improve student outcomes. They are explained as follows:

1. **Student-Centered Success** is a foundational principle that ensures students receive timely and personalized support. The HBCUs prioritize individualized academic assistance through one-on-one meetings, staff observations, and alignment with institutional mission and goals to address student needs holistically.

2. **Structural Student Success** is also a key driver of institutional transformation. The three HBCUs have strategically restructured their organizations and leadership to implement initiatives that better support students who require academic preparation and financial assistance. These efforts encompass adjustments to course offerings, policies addressing financial holds and college costs, advancements in information technology, and expanded outreach to high schools. These structural shifts are designed to improve practices and policies that impact access, retention, and degree completion.

3. **Broadening Student Success** ensures that HBCUs remain relevant and competitive in an ever-changing higher education landscape. As national student demographics shift, these institutions actively explore innovative ways to attract students beyond their historical mission while maintaining their rich legacy. By focusing on relevance, financial stability, and innovation, they create sustainable models for enrollment, persistence, and student completion. This ongoing effort reflects a commitment to evolving in ways that strengthen institutional impact and expand opportunities for all students.

This case study examines how these HBCUs apply these strategies to foster student achievement in **digital learning**. By assessing their innovative approaches and best practices, we aim to provide insights to inform broader higher education efforts to create universal access, pathways to success, and effective digital learning environments.

Objectives of the Case Study

This case study will examine digital learning through the lens of **Student-Centered Success**, **Structural Success**, and **Broadening Success** to understand how Claflin, Fayetteville State, and Morehouse College advanced their digital learning strategies. These strategies have now become effective practices for creating access and opportunities for their students. The case study will:

1. **Examine the Implementation of the Strategies**—Analyze how Claflin University, Fayetteville State University, and Morehouse College have embedded **Student-Centered**, **Structural**, and **Broadening** strategies into their institutional frameworks to enhance digital learning.

2. **Highlight Best Practices and Innovations**—Showcase these HBCUs' innovative approaches to supporting student success, including personalized academic assistance, strategic structural shifts, and creative recruitment and retention models.

3. **Identify Challenges and Opportunities**—Explore the barriers students and institutions face in digital learning and how these HBCUs have addressed systemic inequities through policy adjustments, technology enhancements, and financial support initiatives.

4. **Provide Scalable Insights for Higher Education**—Offer practical takeaways that other institutions, especially HBCUs and minority-serving institutions, can use to strengthen digital learning environments and improve student outcomes.

5. **Demonstrate the Impact of the Gates Foundation's Frontier Set Initiative**—Assess how participation in the Frontier Set initiative has influenced institutional transformation and student success strategies.
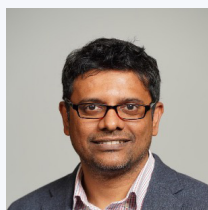
This case study will address these objectives, contribute to the broader discourse on evidence-based digital learning practices, and offer actionable recommendations for institutions striving to create accessible, inclusive, and effective educational experiences.

Methodology

This case study employs a qualitative research approach to examine how Claflin University, Fayetteville State University, and Morehouse College integrated digital learning with academic success strategies during and after their participation in the Frontier Set. Data were collected through archival documents from 2015 to 2022, covering the period of the three HBCUs' involvement in the Frontier Set project, and semi-structured interviews with institutional stakeholders in 2022 through 2025. Interview participants included Mr. Muhammad Hossain, Director of Instructional Technology at Claflin University; Dr. Bonnie Grohe, Executive Director of Faculty Development and Online Education at Fayetteville State University; and Dr. Melvin Foster, Associate Provost for Academic Success at Morehouse College. These individuals, who have continued in digital learning roles at their institutions, provided both institutional knowledge and firsthand insights into digital learning practices.

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine how Claflin University, Fayetteville State University, and Morehouse College integrated digital learning with academic success strategies following the Frontier Set initiative. By analyzing archival documents and conducting semi-structured interviews with key institutional stakeholders, the study provides a rich, contextually grounded analysis of digital learning practices. The methodology captures institutional knowledge while highlighting the lived experiences of those who have shaped and sustained digital learning initiatives over nearly a decade from 2015 to 2025. This approach strengthens the study's ability to offer meaningful insights into the long-term impact of digital learning strategies within these three institutions.

Mr. Muhammad Hossain
Director of Instructional Technology

Dr. Bonnie Grohe
Executive Director of Faculty Development and Online Education

Dr. Melvin Foster
Associate Provost for Academic Success

Interview Participants

Findings and Analysis

These findings showcase strategies that the three HBCUs used to enhance digital learning opportunities for all students and support them in achieving their academic goals. Also, it highlights the significance of technology, digital learning, and support services and its role in enhancing student success outcomes.

The case study illustrates how academic institutions can better assist students through innovative digital learning and technological practices. The findings and analysis section provides strategies employed by three HBCUs to integrate student-centered programs and practices into digital learning and technology. These efforts specifically aim to support underserved students in reaching their academic goals.

Key findings **one through three** detail how each institution integrates **student-centered programs and processes** into digital learning and technology to support underserved students in achieving academic success. Key findings **four through six** highlight how **structural support systems and resources** at each institution are utilized to enhance academic success. Last, key findings **seven through nine** consider how each institution **continues to broaden success** by examining exisiting barriers to success, how these barriers are addressed, and measurable outcomes achieved through accessible digital learning strategies.

KEY FINDING #1: Notable Student-Centered Programs at Morehouse College

- The Morehouse Academic Accelerator Program allows first-time students to access coursework before their first full semester. This program provides between 3 and 11 credit hours over six weeks at a reduced cost of $3,500 and is delivered virtually to eliminate travel expenses.

- The Thomas J. Blocker Program introduces students to medical professions through a six-week, all-expense-paid initiative. Participants are exposed to the fields of biology, psychology, and chemistry while engaging with alumni physicians who guide them on potential medical career pathways.

- The STEM Preparation Programs, part of a consortium with Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University, offer free on-campus exposure to STEM fields for dual-degree engineering majors. Students have the opportunity to interact with Black engineers who share their experience and success stories.

Specific Examples of Digital Learning and Technologies at Morehouse College

- Morehouse College utilizes Blackboard Ultra and Starfish as digital learning platforms to enhance students' learning experience.

Adaptive Learning Platforms

- Notable examples of Adaptive Learning Platforms at Morehouse College include ALEKS, which offers intuitive math instruction, and Labster, which provides interactive virtual lab simulations for chemistry and biology.

"**Make sure that the product or process you're engaging in has a clearly identified audience and that you've created buy-in. If you've not done that, it will not be successful. You will waste a bunch of money on something that is bright and shiny, and it will sit there and collect dust, whether that's in the real world or the virtual world.**"

—Dr. Melvin Foster, *From Interviews Conducted in 2022-2025*

Feedback Mechanisms

- Morehouse University tracked student progress through Starfish, a student success software, to monitor academic progress, flag challenges, and facilitate interventions through faculty and success coaches.

Morehouse integrates student-centered programs to proactively support students through early career exposure and financial accessibility. By leveraging Starfish for student tracking and adaptive learning platforms such as ALEKS in math and Labster in biology and chemistry, Morehouse ensures that first-time students, particularly those from underserved backgrounds, receive tailored guidance in high-demand career pathways. These initiatives reduce financial barriers, enhance persistence, and accelerate degree completion, reinforcing Morehouse's institutional commitment to student success.

KEY FINDING #2: Notable Student-Centered Programs at Fayetteville State University

- Faculty training focuses on universal design principles to ensure accessible course materials for all students.

- Targeted workshops and onboarding sessions introduce students to digital learning tools and available resources.

Specific Examples of Digital Learning and Technologies at Fayetteville State University

- The Digital Textbook Initiative ensures students can access textbooks on accessible platforms from the first day of classes.

- Bronco Navigate, an analytics-driven early alert system, supports timely interventions for student success.

- Adobe Creative Cloud supports academic and career development, equipping students with industry-standard tools.

Adaptive Learning Platforms

- The university employs adaptive learning initiatives through the **iAdapted Initiative**,[7] targeting high-risk gateway courses to improve outcomes.

- Instructor preparation is recognized as vital for the success of adaptive learning initiatives.

Feedback Mechanisms

- The university conducts needs assessments and program evaluations to collect actionable feedback.

- Data collected from these assessments is utilized to refine digital learning strategies to address student needs.

Fayetteville State University integrates a comprehensive student-centered success model that integrates technology-enhanced digital learning, proactive academic support, and universal design principles. Through the Bronco Navigate early alert system, targeted onboarding for online courses introduces students to digital tools and adaptive learning and targets high-risk courses; in this way, FSU ensures that students receive timely interventions during their academic journey. Faculty development is also prioritized, focusing on refining digital teaching practices and fostering an inclusive learning environment to better serve diverse student populations.

KEY FINDING #3: Notable Student-Centered Programs at Claflin University

- Claflin University has transitioned from a faculty advising model to a system incorporating professional success coaches collaborating with faculty to provide personalized student support.

- Each school's success coaches focus on identifying and assisting at-risk students through an improved early alert system.

- Funding from the Gates Foundation post-COVID has enabled classrooms to be equipped with synchronous session technology and has provided devices and internet connectivity to underserved students.

Specific Examples of Digital Learning and Technologies at Claflin University

- TutorTrack serves as an early alert system.

- Upswing is used for tutoring services.

- An academic department intranet has been developed to centralize resources such as scholarships and internships.

Adaptive Learning Platforms

- Aktiv is used for chemistry courses, and Hawkes Learning is used for math courses.

Feedback Mechanisms

- Feedback is collected through course evaluations, informal training sessions, and data from the Learning Management System administrator.

- To further refine digital learning strategies, plans are in place to reintroduce digital learning surveys annually.

Claflin University enhances student-centered success through a highly personalized support structure that includes professional success coaching, early alert systems, and robust centralized academic resources. Claflin's transition from a traditional faculty advising model to a professional advisor coaching model has increased the interactions with at-risk students so that they can receive timely academic interventions. Digital tools such as TutorTrack and Upswing provide targeted advising and tutoring support, while Claflin's academic department intranet centralizes student resources, such as scholarships and internships. In addition, Claflin integrates adaptive learning platforms such as AKTIV for chemistry courses and Hawkes Learning for math courses, equipping students to further promote access, engagement, and retention.

Each of the institution's student-centered programs offers digital learning tools and holistic student support to promote student success. This customized guidance and faculty engagement addresses the academic, financial, and technological barriers that underserved students face. These efforts are in alignment with HBCUs' broader mission to enhance student engagement and improve persistence rates, and ensure that students have the resources and support they need to graduate.

KEY FINDING #4: Structural Success Practices that Enhance Student Success at Morehouse College

- Academic coaching for first-generation and Pell-eligible students at Morehouse College provides individual support to help students effectively navigate resources and digital tools such as Blackboard for course management and Starfish for tracking their academic progress and success plans.

- The Educational Accessibility Services Office promotes an inclusive campus atmosphere for all students by offering virtual class options and ensuring that campus spaces are accessible to students with disabilities, providing all students with equal opportunities for success. Morehouse College is launching Accommodate software, which will streamline the accommodation request process for students and provide faculty with digital tools to manage accommodations more efficiently.

Engagement Strategies

- Morehouse College is expanding its academic coaching sessions to provide more outreach and more personalized coaching sessions that identify and address students' needs.

- The Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EIB) is committed to addressing structural barriers by conducting research and implementing thoughtful adjustments to promote opportunities throughout its institution.

Faculty and Staff

The use of the new Accommodate software at Morehouse College will provide faculty members with actionable and comprehensive information on student accommodations, leading to a more supportive learning environment. Morehouse has enhanced structural student success through academic coaching for first-generation and Pell-eligible students, expanded accessibility services, and provided digital tools like Blackboard, Starfish, and Accommodate software. These structural initiatives ensure that students receive personalized guidance, access to resources enabling inclusive learning environments, and improved faculty engagement to increase persistence and degree completion.

KEY FINDING #5: Structural Student Success Support at Fayetteville State University

- Fayetteville State University restructured its student services by establishing the Bronco One Stop, an integrated service delivery model that streamlines processes for advising, enrollment management, and academic support to enhance student access and foster a holistic approach to student success and improved academic outcomes. Bronco Navigate is an analytics-driven technology that tracks early alerts, student participation, and academic outcomes, enabling targeted outreach and timely interventions to support student success.

- Digital orientation programs for tools such as Canvas equip students with essential skills to navigate digital platforms effectively.

- The Adobe Creative Cloud Campus Initiative integrates digital tools into academic and career development, enabling students to build essential digital skills.

Engagement Strategies

- Fayetteville State University demonstrates a commitment to implementing faculty development programs that thoughtfully adapt teaching practices to better serve the diverse needs of its students. While FSU initially faced some funding constraints and stakeholder engagement challenges, the institution has successfully navigated these obstacles by fostering enhanced collaboration and dialogue with its stakeholders.

- This engagement fosters a shared understanding of goals, which has minimized errors in implementing student-centered practices.

Faculty and Staff

- At Fayetteville State University, faculty members are trained in universal design principles to ensure that course materials are accessible to all students.

- Continuous professional development enables faculty to meet the evolving needs of diverse learners.

- Fayetteville State University has restructured its student success efforts by integrating analytics reporting systems such as early alert software, digital orientation programs, and faculty training in universal design into institutional policies. These targeted initiatives ensure students have the resources, skills, and academic support to thrive in digital learning environments.

KEY FINDING #6: Structural Student Success Support at Claflin University

- Claflin University utilizes student success coaches, in collaboration with a data-driven approach and early alert system. Their processes and practices identify and support at-risk students. This strategy aids their institution in improving first- to second-year retention rates.

- Claflin University offers First- and Second-Year Experience programs that provide valuable courses and mentorship opportunities tailored for new students.

- The recent renovations of learning spaces—including the library and dedicated areas for math, computer science, and mass communication—integrate innovative collaborative and active learning technologies. The university is exploring options to provide 24/7 access to these newly renovated learning spaces. This will promote an inclusive and supportive environment for all learners.

> **"Building partnerships is key... faculty collaborations are key as well, and at the end of the day, faculty are the ones teaching the students.... Working collaboratively with external and internal partners is an important aspect of implementing change."**
>
> —Mr. Muhammad Hossain, *From Interviews Conducted in 2022-2025*

Engagement Strategies

- Claflin University effectively utilizes a data dashboard that empowers success coaches to monitor student progress, identify potential challenges, and intervene in a timely manner.

Faculty and Staff

- The leadership at Claflin values data-driven decision-making and is dedicated to equipping faculty and staff with the necessary tools to monitor and support student achievement effectively.

- The renovations of academic spaces are designed to encourage collaborative teaching approaches, promoting active engagement in digital and hybrid learning environments.

- Claflin has strengthened its commitment to student success by implementing data-driven early alert systems, professional success coaching, and structured programs designed for the first- and second-year experience. Further, Claflin has renovated collaborative learning spaces and utilizes a data dashboard to ensure timely decision-making, increased retention, and improved student engagement in digital and hybrid learning environments.

Each institution has implemented structural shifts led by institutional leadership to drive transformation. These HBCUs have reshaped policies, redesigned advising and learning spaces, and leveraged technology-driven interventions to foster institution-wide collaboration for removing barriers to access, retention, and degree completion.

KEY FINDING #7: Barriers Faced by Underserved Students at Morehouse College

- Barriers that hinder underserved students at Morehouse College include limited access to early academic exposure and lack of customized support before enrolling full-time.

Support Systems and Resources

- Morehouse College offers several pre-enrollment initiatives to provide early academic exposure and personalized student support. These initiatives include the Morehouse Academic Accelerator Program (MAAP), the Thomas J. Blocker Program, and dual-degree engineering programs.

- The college's Metaverse program features 15 virtual reality (VR) classes accessible to all students, promoting an inclusive learning environment regardless of socioeconomic background. VR headsets are available through donations or from the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library, extending access to students from other institutions, such as Morris Brown College.

- Partnerships with Victory XR focus on creating culturally accurate avatars that represent a diverse range of features, including various hair types, skin tones, and body types.

Metrics and Data

- Morehouse tracks student retention and academic performance of participants in the Morehouse Academic Accelerator Program (MAAP) and the Thomas J. Blocker Program.

- The Metaverse program monitors student participation in VR courses, engagement levels, and learning outcomes.

Morehouse College addresses barriers for underserved students by leveraging pre-enrollment initiatives, immersive digital learning environments, and culturally responsive technology and partnerships. Initiatives such as the Morehouse Academic Accelerator Program (MAAP), the Metaverse program, and partnerships with Victory XR have enabled the institution to expand access to cutting-edge technology, increase student success, and prepare students for future workforce demands. These innovative, technology-driven strategies ensure that underserved students persist and succeed in their academic and post-graduation journeys.

KEY FINDING #8: Barriers Faced by Underserved Students at Fayetteville State University

- Students from rural areas, students with low-income backgrounds, and students of color encounter several challenges, including limited access to technology and digital learning tools.

- Some of Fayetteville State University's underserved students struggle with high-risk gateway courses, which present significant academic difficulties.

Support Systems and Resources

Several support programs have now been implemented to address many of the challenges related to digital learning at Fayetteville State:

- The **Freshman Laptop Program** ensures all incoming students can access the necessary devices.

- The **Library Laptop Loaner Program** provides additional access to devices for non-freshman students.

- The **Bronco One-Stop Student Center** centralizes services, offering both in-person and virtual support to alleviate the burdens faced by rural students and streamline access to academic and non-academic resources.

- **Bronco Navigate** provides personalized academic interventions to identify and address challenges early.

- **Adaptive learning initiatives**, such as the iAdapted Initiative, aim to improve student outcomes in high-risk gateway courses.

- The **Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) faculty development partnership** equips instructors with strategies to foster a sense of belonging and address the barriers experienced by underserved students effectively.

- The **Library's Immersion Lab** features virtual and augmented reality tools; initially piloted by biology faculty, there are plans for its broader use in the future.

Metrics and Data

- While assessing the impact of adaptive learning tools, such as the I-Adaptive program, poses challenges, Fayetteville State University actively prepares instructors to enhance learning outcomes.

- An AI task force is developing policies for faculty and course syllabi to ensure AI's ethical and effective utilization in digital learning environments.

Fayetteville State University addresses barriers that rural, low-income, and underserved students face by implementing technology access programs, centralized student support services, and adaptive learning initiatives for high-risk courses. Through the Freshman Laptop Program, Library Loaner Program, and Bronco One-Stop Center, FSU ensures equitable access to digital tools which reduces financial barriers. In addition, the institution has made substantial investments in faculty development, AI-driven academic support, and augmented reality learning environments, expanding opportunities for students to engage further, and increasing persistence and graduation rates.

> **"It's hard to point to one thing, but I believe it was the Frontier Set work that was done. And then it just gave us this infrastructure from which to build. I believe that was the impetus for all of it."**
>
> —Dr. Bonnie Grohe, *From Interviews Conducted in 2022-2025*

KEY FINDING #9: Barriers Faced by Underserved Students at Claflin University

- Students in rural areas, those from low-income backgrounds, and students of color often face significant challenges in accessing education and technology, particularly during their first year.

Support Systems and Resources

- Claflin University has created a new student center that boasts a technology-advanced study area, collaborative work spaces, and enhanced access to digital tools.

- Personalized learning and tutoring services are available to meet the diverse needs of students. These services include adaptive courseware, face-to-face peer tutoring, and virtual on-demand support.

- Technology-infused learning environments, including upgraded classrooms and libraries, enhance the overall digital education experience.

- An upcoming AI-powered student support system will provide real-time assistance and streamline resource access.

- A centralized Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will enhance the management of student applications and engagement.

- The Dean of Student Engagement oversees initiatives to foster academic and social engagement, ensuring students receive comprehensive support.

Metrics and Data

- Claflin University is focused on tracking and measuring student access and success by monitoring the effectiveness of personalized learning initiatives and utilizing data from new AI and CRM systems to evaluate student engagement and outcomes.

- Claflin University has expanded its access to technology, upgraded student learning spaces, introduced AI-driven student support, and centralized academic and non-academic resources. Further, the institution has created forward-thinking models for broadening access, and to increase digital learning engagement and support student persistence. Claflin University demonstrates its focus and commitment to technology advancements, collaborative work spaces, and faculty-driven innovations. It has maintained an institutional focus on sustainability, scalability, and continuous improvement in digital education.

- Claflin has holistically addressed the challenges faced by rural, low-income, and underserved students by its implementation of pre-enrollment initiatives, adaptive learning strategies, virtual reality learning environments, and centralized student support systems.

The efforts of each institution demonstrate a strategic commitment to expanding access, fostering inclusivity, and innovating digital learning environments to support broadening student success.

Challenges Identified Across the Three HBCUs

Each of the HBCUs experienced common challenges during the implementation of accessibility-focused digital learning. The most common challenges visible across the institutions include:

- **Technology Integration**: Each institution experienced challenges while integrating digital learning tools with their existing institutional systems, requiring extensive and careful alignment. For example, Morehouse implemented Accommodate software, FSU leveraged digital learning tools, and Claflin adopted centralized digital platforms.

- **Student Digital Preparedness**: First-generation, low-income, and rural students at all three institutions faced difficulties navigating digital learning tools and required structured onboarding and personalized support to engage with platforms such as Blackboard, Starfish, and early alert systems.

- **Alignment between Stakeholders and Decision-Makers**: Each institution encountered gaps in coordination along the way. For example, Morehouse faced challenges with breaking down silos for a more coordinated approach to student support across departments; FSU emphasized the importance of securing faculty and administrative buy-in early in the process to ensure the smooth adoption of digital tools; and Claflin streamlined multiple student support systems for effective integration to enhance student engagement and success.

These common challenges highlight the importance of proactive planning, faculty and student engagement, and institutional alignment in advancing digital learning initiatives.

Recommendations

Foundational recommendations for institutions seeking to adopt similar strategies include:

1. **Evaluate Digital Learning Protocols**. Review policies, processes, and digital learning resources to identify areas that can benefit from data utilization as part of the institution's process to understand differences across student demographics and inform decision-making.

2. **Engage Campus Stakeholders for Digital Learning Success Strategies**. Convene a diverse group of campus stakeholders and community supporters to engage in cross-functional collaboration and input.

3. **Create SMART Goals and Supporting Objectives for Digital Learning**. Develop specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for digital learning and student success outcomes that align with institutional capacity and student needs.

4. **Develop a Digital Learning Action Plan to Support Universal Access**. Create a detailed action plan to support the execution of SMART goals. The plan should specify strategies for integrating digital learning tools and support systems, actionable timelines, resource allocations for student support, faculty training and infrastructure improvements, and responsible individuals throughout campus to ensure accountability.

5. **Monitor and Evaluate the Progress and Execution of the Action Plan**. Establish measures of success to track goal progress and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing strategies for student access and success in digital learning. Use these metrics to assess and refine strategies continuously.

6. **Collaborate and Share Knowledge**. Engage with other institutions and national networks to share and incorporate effective strategies and best practices for digital learning to foster and expand academic reach.

Incorporating these six digital learning strategies for broadening access, institutions can enhance their efforts to cultivate an engaging digital learning environment that benefits all students.

Conclusion

This case study provided insights into how three HBCUs—Claflin University, Fayetteville State University, and Morehouse College—have paved the way for student success in digital learning through innovative progress and institutional commitment to effective practices. Further, it illustrates the possibilities for institutions to center their digital learning strategies around **student success**, **structural support**, and **broadening educational opportunities**. Leadership at each institution signals a transformative change in digital learning efforts that fosters long-term sustainability.

These findings highlight three critical factors of success:

1. **Sustained advancements in digital learning** technologies and practices over the past ten years have led to enhanced engagement and access.

2. The consistent application of **student-centered strategies and inclusive targeted support** systems have improved learning outcomes for underserved students.

3. **Strong leadership at each institution** played a pivotal role in driving digital learning initiatives and fostering innovation and continuous improvement.

Each institution's participation in the Frontier Set initiative has been key in accelerating institutional transformation and scaling student success strategies related to digital learning. Participation in the Frontier Set gave each HBCU access to resources, collaborative networks, and data-driven insights that helped refine their approaches to digital learning.

Key Takeaways

1. The institutions prioritized strategies centered on student-centered success, structural success, and broadening success. They implemented inclusive and targeted support strategies essential to creating meaningful digital learning experiences for all students.

2. The three HBCUs identified challenges and opportunities that addressed systemic barriers driving policy changes and improving resource allocation for digital learning.

3. The insights and lessons these institutions learned from participating in the Frontier Set initiative underscore the significance of collaborative efforts and shared learning to drive institutional transformation, helping them to further scale effective digital learning practices.

4. The three HBCUs continue to expand access and improve learning. Digital learning opportunities ensure that student success is core to institutional priorities.

This case study can serve as a valuable resource for institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders that aim to improve their digital learning strategies and student success initiatives for underrepresented populations by offering scalable strategies. As innovative digital learning opportunities continue to expand and evolve on college campuses, the experiences of Claflin, Fayetteville State, and Morehouse College serve as a model to guide broader efforts to reshape and ensure universal access, effective support systems, and pathways to success for all students.

Notes

[1] The Frontier Set at https://frontierset.org

[2] The Guide for Postsecondary Transformation at https://postsecondarytransformation.org/

[3] Fast Facts, National Center for Education Statistics at https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/

[4] Claflin University at https://www.claflin.edu/

[5] Fayetteville State University at https://www.uncfsu.edu/

[6] Morehouse College at https://morehouse.edu/

[7] QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) at Fayetteville State University https://www.uncfsu.edu/qep-quality-enhancement-plan/

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Every Learner Everywhere partners with colleges and universities to leverage technology in pursuit of student-centered, faculty-powered, and institution-driven improvement in teaching and learning.

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