

## **Increasing Minority Student and Female Student Retention in STEM Fields through MERIT Program**

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**Abstract:** Increasing minority student retention and attracting female students in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields are important objectives in many university programs (Dave et al., 2010). The Maryland Elite Researchers In-Training (MERIT) Program is such a program. Funded by NASA, the MERIT established and enhanced research training programs at five universities: Morgan State University (MSU), Capital College, University of Maryland College Park (UMCP), University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), and University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). The Pre-freshman Accelerated Curriculum in Engineering (PACE) Program is a summer transitional program for incoming engineering students at MSU. The Flexus program of UMCP is a living and learning community designed to directly impact the recruitment and retention of female engineering undergraduate students. At Capital College the STEM Leaders Program was established to increase the retention of underrepresented students in STEM majors. The Center for Women in Technology (CWIT) is a merit-based scholarship program for students majoring in the STEM fields at UMBC. UMES created the Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics (STEAM) Scholarship program to focus on improving retention rate and enrollment for students in STEM majors. This data will be used to analyze the student's interest in the STEM fields, and student's interest in pursuing higher education in the STEM fields.

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