Appalachian College Association (ACA) and Credo are pleased to announce the launch of a second cohort in Fall 2021 to improve student outcomes across ACA member institutions. The ongoing ACA and Credo partnership will continue to:

- Result in improved retention and graduation rates, a corresponding increase in institutional net revenue, and the strengthening of each school’s institutional culture and regional impact.
- Build on the rich collaborative expertise of ACA and the proven results of Credo’s Moving the Needle (MTN) project.
- Bring small cohorts of colleges and universities in central Appalachia together to strengthen their capacity to support students from matriculation to graduation.
- Identify each cohort institution’s challenges and opportunities regarding retention, uncovering the most promising areas for progress and implementing proven strategies for success.

You are officially invited to a first step in the process by attending an informational webinar on December 7th or 8th.

**About Credo**

Credo is a consulting firm focusing exclusively on independent higher education. Its mission is to help independent education thrive so as to support the success of students.

- Credo has been an essential resource for more than 450 colleges and universities for 25 years.
- Credo’s MTN has been implemented by 17 schools to date. All schools that have completed the full program have seen dramatic results: significant increases in student retention ranging from twelve to twenty-four percent increases over four years and in additional annual net revenue between one and two million dollars.
- Credo is currently in partnership with the first ACA / Credo Student Success Collaboration, led by Bluefield College and Carson-Newman University.

**Why Student Success?**

Retention of students is a critical concern for ACA campuses who enroll a significant number of first generation, rural, and low-income students. From the colleges’ perspective, student retention is both mission-central and a matter of financial resilience. From students’ perspective, retention/success to
graduation is critical for achieving life goals, for successful engagement in the labor market and beyond. And in the Appalachian communities where students are from, having an educated workforce is increasingly critical for the region’s long-term economic resilience.

About the Work
Credo’s Moving the Needle (MTN) project is the only campus-consultant partnership that reorients a campus culture around the success of its students, both in strategy and in practice. It is a multi-year, data-driven effort, with immediate and long-term student success outcomes. MTN is especially built for small and medium-sized campuses, with retention ranging from 60% to 85%. In partnership with campus leaders, Credo:

- co-creates a multi-year, multi-dimensional student success plan that actively engages all divisions of the institution.
- guides on-campus leadership to achieve monthly and annual milestones and provides targeted expertise on key initiatives.
- combines national best practices with strategies to address both overall obstacles to student success and the specific needs of different groups of students.
- builds institutional capacity for leadership, implementation, and accountability.

The proposed project adapts MTN to a cohort approach. Working as a cohort will allow participants to build upon their shared goals, develop rich networks of peers across multiple institutions, and enhance student success effectiveness and regional impact beyond the life of the project. You can learn more about the MTN Cohort model here.

Expected Outcomes
The MTN project is designed to provide a direct return on investment, through the following student success outcomes:

- Improved fall-to-fall retention rates;
- reduced gaps in retention for students from underrepresented groups; and
- higher graduation rates.

To support this effort, the MTN project will: A) develop a comprehensive strategic retention plan, built around enhanced departmental partnerships and professional development for middle management and other key leaders; B) strengthen campus systems, processes, and efficiencies; and C) enhance a mission-centered focus on the students’ experience. Overall, the cohort model will strengthen support for student success, help ensure institutional sustainability, and enhance regional impact.

Immediate Next Step
Please register for a 90-minute informational webinar on December 7th or 8th, designed for members of the senior team. This webinar will be led by Dr. Joretta Nelson, with an introduction by Beth Rushing.

For additional information, please contact ACA President, Beth Rushing at Beth.Rushing@acaweb.org or Credo Senior Vice President / Owner, Joretta Nelson at jnelson@credohighered.com.