**College Ready: Redesigning Developmental Education through Academic Supports and Curricular Innovation**

The UW System’s Gates State Systems Transformation Grant

In early 2014, the UW System was one of 12 higher education systems awarded a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation State Systems Transformation Grant aimed at improving educational outcomes for underserved students through system-led change initiatives. The vision of UW System’s project—named “College Ready: Redesigning Developmental Education through Academic Supports and Curricular Innovation”—is to give all UW students requiring developmental education a high-quality, high-impact educational experience. Approximately 20-25% of the UW System’s more than 156,000 undergraduates place into developmental education each year, including a disproportionately high number of underrepresented minority (URM), Pell-eligible and non-traditional students.

The Gates grant specifies an aggressive timeline and templates for project visioning, alignment, blueprinting, and prototyping. Between June and July, 2014, the UWSA Gates Grant Core Leadership Team developed a blueprint to be beta-tested at select UW institutions, drawing on key reform strategies recommended by the UW Systemwide Remedial Education Work Group. Specifically, the blueprint hypothesizes that advancing students who score just below the cut-off for placement into credit-bearing courses in math and English into those first-credit-bearing courses, accompanied by strong academic and student support services, will improve their academic success (retention, overall engagement, and graduation).

To support the prototyping of the blueprint, and in fulfillment of the grant requirements, two primary efforts have been launched:

First, on November 10 and 11, 2014, the UW System Office of Academic & Student Affairs is hosting a two-day College Ready Institute focused on developmental education reform work. Held at the Concourse Hotel in Madison, the Institute allows for in-depth engagement with recommendations from the report of the UW Systemwide Remedial Education Work Group and the UW System’s emerging framework for developmental education reform, sharing of best practices across UW institutions, and intensive focus on the Gates grant blueprint. Every degree-granting UW institution is sending a team to the Institute, where they will use “team time” to develop strategic action plans focused on their developmental education students and contexts.

Second, grant funding has been earmarked for beta-testing and prototyping of the grant blueprint by a select number of UW institutions. The Interim Senior Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs, in consultation with the UWSA Gates Grant Core Leadership Team, has identified four UW institutions to receive funding to test the blueprint: the UW Colleges, UW-La Crosse, UW-Milwaukee, and UW-Parkside. Funds will be awarded in December 2014 for projects taking place in 2015 and 2016.

The Gates Grant is one of the multi-pronged reform strategies led by UW System President Ray Cross and Interim Senior Vice President David J. Ward to build the System’s capacity to improve student persistence and completion for all students through a more coordinated approach to college readiness and developmental education. It renews the University of Wisconsin System’s commitment to helping more students meet their educational goals in college and beyond, while strengthening the pipeline of Wisconsin’s workforce development.