2021 Report on Developmental Education in the University of Wisconsin System

Executive Summary

Background

In November 1988, the Board of Regents adopted Resolution 5088, requiring students who are not well-prepared for college-level mathematics or English courses to take developmental coursework to ensure they have the skills needed to succeed in their course of study. The Board of Regents requires, under Resolution 7382, that the University of Wisconsin System staff report on the status of developmental education every three years.

Beginning with the 2021 report, the developmental education measures have been organized and presented in an interactive dashboard report. This dashboard will allow the Regents and public to examine the performance of different institutions and of different groups of students in detail. The dashboard will also provide a tool for UW System institutions to evaluate the success of efforts with different populations on their campuses.

The dashboard provides information of developmental education in the following areas:

1. Students requiring and completing developmental education.
2. College level course enrollments and completion.
3. Retention and graduation by developmental education status.
4. Student outcome by developmental education status and course taken in the 1st year.
5. Institutional efforts to reduce developmental education needs and promote student success.

This full dashboard report can be found here:
https://www.wisconsin.edu/education-reports-statistics/developmental-education/

A summary of the results in each area appear below.

1. Students requiring and completing developmental education

- Among fall 2020 new freshmen, 5,240 or 20% were required to enroll in developmental math education. The percentage of students requiring developmental math education varied between 17% (2016) and 22% (2019) over the last ten years.

- The percentage of new freshmen requiring developmental English education was 5% (1,386 students) for fall 2020 cohort. In the last decade, this percentage was highest in fall 2012 (10%) and lowest in fall 2020.

- Of fall 2019 new freshmen requiring developmental math education, 63% (3,885 students) completed the requirement in a year. This rate is the same as it was in fall 2018 and over the last ten years was highest in 2014 (72%).

- Of fall 2019 new freshmen requiring developmental English education, 1,003 or 58% completed the requirement in a year. This is the lowest completion rate in the last two decades.

- First generation college students, non-immediate new freshmen (those students who do not move immediately from high school to a University), low-income students, and URM students are more likely to require developmental math and less likely to complete the requirement in a year.

- Female students are more likely to require developmental math and more likely to complete the requirement within a year.

- First generation college students, non-immediate new freshmen, low-income students, and URM students are more likely to require developmental English education.

2. College-level course enrollments and completion

- Sixty-eight percent of fall 2019 new freshmen enrolled in a college level math course in 2019-20. This percentage has been stable around 70% for the last few years.

- Among fall 2019 new freshmen who enrolled in college level math course, 93% successfully completed at least 1 college level course in the 1st year.

- Seventy-two percent of fall 2019 new freshmen enrolled in a college level English course in 2019-20. This percentage has been stable above 70% in the last few years.

- Among fall 2019 new freshmen who enrolled in college level English course, 93% successfully completed at least 1 college level course in the 1st year.

- The chance that a student will enroll in a college level math course in the 1st year is much lower for students requiring developmental math education. Of fall 2019 new freshmen who required developmental math education, 54% enrolled in a college level math course in a year, compared to 73% for those who were not required developmental math.

- The possibility of successfully completing a college level math course is lower for students who were required developmental math. Of fall new freshmen who were required developmental math and enrolled in a college level math course in the 1st year, 87% successfully completed at least a college level math course in the 1st year, compared to 94% of those who were not required developmental math.

- First generation college students, low-income students, and URM students who were required to take developmental math were less likely to enroll in a college level course and complete the course in the first year, compared to their counterparts.

3. Retention and graduation by developmental education status

- Students who were required to take developmental education and completed the requirement in the first year have comparable 2nd year retention as those who were not required to take developmental education. Students who were required but had not completed developmental education have much lower 2nd year retention rate.

- The most recent second year retention rate at the same UW institution is 85% for students who were not required to take developmental math, 81% for those who were required to take developmental math and completed the requirement in the 1st year. It is 52% for those who were required developmental math but did not complete the requirement in the 1st year.

- For English, the most recent second year retention rate at same UW institution is 83% for students who were not required to take developmental English, 76% for those who were required to take developmental English and completed the requirement in the 1st year. It is 57% for those who were required to take developmental math but did not complete the requirement in the 1st year.

- Among students who were required to take developmental education, there is a big gap in 6-year graduation rate between those who completed the requirement in the 1st year and those who did not. The graduation rates of these both groups are lower than those for students who were not required developmental education.

- For those who completed developmental math in the first year, the most recent 6-year graduation rate at same UW institution is 51%, compared to 24% for those who didn't complete developmental math. Students who were not required to take developmental math graduated from the same UW institution at a rate of 69%.

- For those who completed developmental English in the first year, the 6-year graduation rate at same UW institution is 44%, compared to 21% for those who did not complete developmental English. Students who were not required developmental English graduated from the same UW institution at a rate of 67%.

- The gap in retention and graduation rates between students who were required developmental education and completed the requirement and those who were required developmental education but did not complete the requirement has persisted over the last two decades.

4. Student outcome by developmental education status and course taken in the 1st year

- Students who took a college level course in the 1st year had an advantage over other students in both retention and graduation rates. Students who were required to take developmental education but did not take the required developmental courses have the lowest retention and graduation rates among all groups of students.

- Full-time fall new freshmen entering a UW main campus in 2019 were retained at same UW institutions at a rate of 86% if the students took college level math in the 1st year.

- Seventy-four percent of full-time fall new freshmen in 2019 who took developmental math returned to the same UW institutions in the 2nd fall. For those who were required developmental math but did not take the course, the 2nd year retention rate is 51%.

- For fall 2014 new freshmen who took at least one college level math course, the 6-year graduation rate at institution where they started was 69%. The rate is 47% for those who took developmental math and 35% for those who were required to take developmental math but did not take any math course.

- The 2nd year retention rate at the institution where they started for fall 2019 full-time new freshmen entering UW main campus who took college level English in the first year was 82%. The rate was 68% for those who took developmental English course in the 1st year and 56% for those who were required to take developmental English but didn't take the course.

- Of fall 2014 new freshmen, who took at least one college level English course in the first year, 62% graduated from the institution where they started within 6 years. The rate is 46% for those who took developmental English in the 1st year and 35% for those who were required to take developmental English but did not take any English course.

5. Institutional efforts to reduce developmental education needs and promote student success

UW System institutions are involved in broad-based efforts to make developmental education more effective and to ensure those needing developmental education receive it. At the system level, these efforts include the UW System Math Initiative for which in January 2018, Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation awarded the UW System with a $2.3 million grant over three years to help advance the goals of the Initiative. Additionally, a common math placement cut score was implemented with the 2017 incoming class to ensure consistent placement across institutions.

At the institutional level, UW institutions have used creative developmental placement approach, design co-requisite developmental course, and find new pathway to credit-bearing course to reduce the developmental need and improve student success. Summer

bridge programs and additional support are also provided to students to help student success. UW institutions also engage in modifying curriculum, improving course instruction, and using new course delivery mode to help students in developmental education. Highlighted institutional efforts are presented in the Dashboard with brief summaries and links to individual institution's detailed report are provided.