

# 2024 Report on Developmental Education in the Universities of Wisconsin

## 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.

That report on developmental education is organized and presented as an interactive dashboard report. This dashboard allows the Regents and public to examine the performance of different institutions and of different groups of students in detail. The dashboard provides a tool for UW universities to evaluate the success of efforts with different populations on their campuses.

Pursuant to the Board resolution, the report 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 1<sup>st</sup> year.
5. Institutional efforts to reduce developmental education needs and promote student success.

The full dashboard report can be found here:

<https://www.wisconsin.edu/education-reports-statistics/developmental-education/>

A summary of the results in each area appears below.

### 1. Students requiring and completing developmental education

- Among fall 2023 new freshmen, 4,572 or 17% were required to enroll in developmental math education. The percentage of students requiring developmental math education varied between 17% (2016, 2021) and 22% (2019) over the last ten years.
- The percentage of new freshmen requiring developmental English education was 6% (1,653 students) for fall 2023 cohort. In the last decade, this percentage was highest in fall 2014 (8%) and lowest in fall 2020 (5%).

- Of fall 2022 new freshmen requiring developmental math education, 63% (3,135 students) completed the requirement in a year. This rate is higher than it was in fall 2021 and but well below the highest completion rate (2014-72%).
- Of fall 2022 new freshmen requiring developmental English education, 1,217 or 64% completed the requirement in a year. This is the highest completion rate since 2014, though well below the 2014 level (73%).
- First generation college students, non-immediate new freshmen (those students who do not move immediately from high school to 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 but are also 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 2022 new freshmen enrolled in a college level math course in 2022-23. This percentage has been stable around 70% for the last few years.
- Among fall 2022 new freshmen who enrolled in college level math course, 92% successfully completed at least 1 college level course in the 1<sup>st</sup> year.
- Sixty-five percent of fall 2022 new freshmen enrolled in a college level English course in 2022-23. This percentage has been decreasing from 70% in the last few years.
- Among fall 2022 new freshmen who enrolled in college level English course, 91% successfully completed at least 1 college level course in the 1<sup>st</sup> year.
- The chance that a student will enroll in a college level math course in the 1<sup>st</sup> year is much lower for students requiring developmental math education. Of fall 2022 new freshmen who required developmental math education, 62% enrolled in a college level math course in a year, compared to 70% for those who were not required developmental math.
- The possibility of successfully completing a college level math course is lower for students who required developmental math. Of fall new freshmen who required developmental math and enrolled in a college level math course in the 1<sup>st</sup> year, 85% successfully completed

at least one college level math course in the 1<sup>st</sup> year, compared to 93% of those who were not required to enroll in 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention rate.
- The most recent second year retention rate at the same UW institution is 85% for students not required to take developmental math, 81% for those who were required to take developmental math and completed the requirement in the 1<sup>st</sup> year. It is 50% for those who were required developmental math but did not complete the requirement in the 1<sup>st</sup> year.
- For English, the most recent second year retention rate at same UW institution is 84% for students who were not required to take developmental English, 79% for those who were required to take developmental English and who completed in the 1<sup>st</sup> year. It is 42% for those who required developmental math but did not complete the requirement that period.
- Among students who were required to take developmental education, a large gap exists in 6-year graduation rates between those who completed the requirement in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and those who did not. The graduation rates of these both groups are lower than those 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 57%, compared to 25% 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 71%.
- For those who completed developmental English in the first year, the 6-year graduation rate at same UW institution is 51%, compared to 29% 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 68%.
- The gap in retention and graduation rates between students requiring developmental education and completing the requirement and those who 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2022 were retained at same UW institutions at a rate of 86% if the students took college level math in the 1<sup>st</sup> year.
- Seventy-two percent of full-time fall new freshmen in 2022 who took developmental math returned to the same UW institutions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> fall. For those who were required developmental math but did not take the course, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention rate is 54%.
- For fall 2017 new freshmen who took at least one college level math course, the 6-year graduation rate at institution where they started was 71%. The rate is 49% for those who took developmental math and 34% for those who were required to take developmental math but did not take any math course.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> year retention rate at the institution where they started for fall 2022 full-time new freshmen entering UW main campus who took college level English in the first year was 82%. The rate was 65% for those who took developmental English course in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and 41% for those who were required to take developmental English but didn't take the course.
- Of fall 2017 new freshmen, who took at least one college level English course in the first year, 64% graduated from the institution where they started within 6 years. The rate is 43% for those who took developmental English in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and 27% 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**

Over the last decade, UW institutions have developed multiple programs and procedural efforts to ensure developmental education is more effective for those needing it. At the system level, these efforts have included the UW System Math Initiative and the establishment of a common math placement cut score to ensure consistent placement across institutions. At the institutional level, UW institutions have focused on creative placement approach, the design of co-requisite developmental course, and new pathways to credit-bearing course to improve student success. Summer bridge programs and additional support are also provided to students to aid student success. Additionally, UW institutions have engaged 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.