

UW System: Math initiative focused on student success

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MADISON, Wis.—The University of Wisconsin System Math Initiative has brought mathematics faculty, data analysts, advisors, administrators, and others together for a singular purpose: to support timely completion of introductory mathematics courses (gateway math) that are relevant to students' majors or intended fields of study.

This focus on math matters because virtually every student must fulfill a math requirement. Some fulfill that requirement before they enter college. Some place directly into credit-bearing math in their first year. Some, however, are not prepared for math at that level and start in a developmental (remedial) math sequence that may delay or derail their progress to degree.

Math Initiative goals include:

- Reduce the need for developmental math courses
- Improve success of students in developmental and gateway math
- Ensure transfer of gateway math

“Math can be a major barrier to degree completion no matter the major,” said Ray Cross, President of the UW System. “Our Math Initiative is designed to develop strategies to help students succeed in math for their chosen fields.”

Early progress includes:

- New freshmen enrolled in developmental math fell from 21 percent in 2013 to 18 percent in 2018. Math Initiative strategies that support a continued reduction include “summer bridge” programs to prepare incoming students for

college-level math courses in their first year and the use of multiple measures for placement into math—such as the high school grade-point-average or ACT math score—for those students “on the bubble” between placement into developmental or gateway math.

- UW System institutions continue exploring alternatives to developmental math that allow students to fulfill their math requirement faster. One of the Math Initiative strategies is to support expansion of “co-requisite” courses in which students receive developmental instruction while enrolled in a traditional single-semester gateway course. These courses are designed to improve student success and speed progress.
- Systemwide agreement on learning outcomes for the most common gateway math courses— College Algebra, Statistics, and Quantitative Reasoning—ensures equity, consistency, and transfer across UW System. That progress set the stage for collaborating with Wisconsin high schools and technical colleges focused on preparing students to take gateway math courses that will transfer to UW schools, work now underway.

The Math Initiative is funded through a three-year, \$2.3 million grant from Ascendium Education Group.

Find out more at [wisconsin.edu/math-initiative](https://www.wisconsin.edu/math-initiative).