

First Year Student Success Initiative  
Working Group Charge

Student success is central to UMaine's mission, values, reputation and fiscal health. Improving first-year student success is a major focus for Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in 2018-2019. On September 27, we launched the public phase of this initiative at a faculty forum (<https://umaine.edu/provost/academic-affairs-faculty-forums/>). The goal is to develop an integrated plan of actions that will result in improved first year student success as defined by first year retention. Improving student retention adds to the fulfillment of our mission and will allow for creative reinvestment of resources. Several working groups will explore different components of the challenge of first year retention as well as various strategies for improving first year student success. All the working groups will be guided by the same set of principles that are guiding the broader initiative: 1) Consider what UMaine can do (i.e., what factors are within our sphere of influence); 2) Take a multi-pronged approach (i.e., consider multiple strategies); 3) Learn from others (i.e., consider what other universities do to support student success); and 4) Be data informed (i.e., test assumptions against available data).

**Working Group: Placement, Preparation, and Progress**

Charge: Develop a set of recommendations that help to address the challenge of students being academically prepared to succeed in their first-year courses. The primary focus of your recommendations should be around prerequisite mathematics skills. In addressing this charge, please explore the following questions:

- 1) What math skills are required for success in common first year courses?
- 2) Placement tests are commonly used to assess whether students have the prerequisite mathematics skills to succeed in specific mathematics courses and courses that require mathematics skills for success (e.g., General Chemistry). When considering placement tests, please consider the following questions:
  - a) What is the evidence for the validity and/or reliability of the placement test?
  - b) Are there resources associated with the test that allow students to address weaknesses and demonstrate competence with the prerequisite skills?
  - c) What applications does the test have beyond placement?
  - d) What are the costs?
- 3) What are considered best practices with respect to administration of the placement test (e.g., timing, location etc.)?
- 4) What commercially available resources might assist us in this work?

Support

Development of the First Year Student Success plan is a high priority for the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Students Affairs. Therefore, the resources available through these offices

are available to you to support your work. For example, units within the two divisions can provide relevant information and the Office of Institutional Research can provide data and analyses. In addition, modest funds can be made available to support the working group (e.g., funds for members to travel to another institution to learn about their practices). Requests for support should be directed to Robin Delcourt in the Provost's Office.

### Timeline

The following is a rough outline of the timeline for this work. Specific dates will be developed in collaboration with the working groups.

November, 2018 – Working Group formed

January, 2019 – Progress report due; Representatives of all working groups meet for first initiative-wide convening

April, 2019 – Representatives of all working groups meet for second convening of all working groups

May, 2019 – Final reports and recommendations due