

Delta's Academic Excellence Initiative

Fall 2014 retreat



Working to bridge the academic achievement gap that impacts the success of under-represented minority, 1st generation and low-socioeconomic status undergraduate students at UW-Madison and beyond.

Project summary and audience

Delta will be hosting an Academic Excellence Retreat on Tuesday, November 18th, 2014 for all of the UW-Madison campus. The overall goal of the event is to get faculty & staff who teach in courses with adverse academic outcomes (*i.e.*, high D, F, drop rate) for under-represented minority (URM), 1st generation in college, and low socio-economic status (SES) undergraduate students to work with course-level data that is provided by Academic Planning and Institutional Research (APIR) and the Office of the Registrar. This retreat builds on the work around this issue, of many units and individuals across campus.

We will help attendees identify aspects of their curriculum and teaching that are suitable for further examination and ultimately, for action. By borrowing from Industrial & Systems Engineering, we will use a Systems framework to facilitate this approach to problem solving. For example, if an instructor finds that she/he loses 15% of the URM students in her/his course in October, and that happens to coincide with the 1st major exam in the course, then he/she can focus on the instructional practice and student learning supports that occur prior to that exam to address the issue of retention of URM students in her/his course.

The workshop will conclude with a discussion of impactful instructional practices that faculty and staff can adopt to promote the academic success of all of their students. To support this conversation, Delta has developed a handout of actionable, impactful instructional practices, as well as an annotated bibliography that grounds the practices in the educational literature and research.

A luncheon will follow the workshop. Lunch will bring together workshop participants, along with key campus and community leaders. The goal of the lunch is to provide a safe, facilitated space for networking, sharing of programming ideas, and work around a common critical issue for our campus and our community.

Fit with Delta's overall programming

One of Delta's (<http://www.delta.wisc.edu>) core programmatic pillars is Learning through Diversity. This is the idea that diversity is something to be leveraged (*e.g.*, in the classroom) to promote learning. If, as an instructor, you can draw on the unique backgrounds and experiences of your students, and help them connect that with the course content, then the learning experience and environment will be enriched.

Delta is working closely with the Statistics Department to address the D, F, drop rate in STAT 301, a high enrollment undergraduate Statistics course. To do this Delta is developing and providing Teaching Assistant (TA) training this fall. In addition to discussing good teaching practices, the trainings are also exploring the D, F, drop rates of STAT 301 and other courses in the department. The collaboration is providing an opportunity for the Statistics Department to engage in conversations about who enrolls in Statistics courses, as well as how well the department promotes the success of *all* students in its courses. This collaboration is aligned with the Statistics department's Education Innovation funding.

During Spring of 2015, Delta will offer the Diversity in the College Classroom course as part of its normal curriculum of programming. Delta's Achievement/Equity Gap programming was developed from this original course offering three years ago. The workshop and lunch this November build on past, current and future Delta programming around diversity, and, by engaging a large audience of faculty and staff, broaden the impact of our achievement/equity gap programming on campus.

Alignment with UW-Madison's mission and vision

The Delta Program's work around the issue of underrepresented minority, 1st generation in college, and low SES undergraduate student academic achievement aligns directly with both the goals of the campus Education Innovation initiativeⁱ as well as the campus' Strategic Diversity Frameworkⁱⁱ.

Expected outcomes

This retreat will attain the following measurable outcomes. As a result of attending the workshop and lunch, attendees will:

1. Develop a greater awareness of the critical issue(s) around URM, 1st generation in college, and low SES undergraduate student academic achievement through a discussion of both local and national data.
2. Learn both an approach and methodology for analyzing their classroom level data, and as a result, be better able to identify aspects of their curriculum, teaching practices, and administration of the course (*e.g.*, reviewing and aligning course prerequisites with curriculum, enforcing course prerequisites, paying attention to how sections are released for enrollment) for potential intervention to address the academic achievement gap in their classrooms.
3. Learn about specific, impactful teaching practices to use to improve student learning.
4. Develop new connections and collaborations around this issue with other members of the campus and Madison community.

The November event will be hosted by the Delta Program in Research, Teaching and Learning, and is in collaboration with a variety of campus units which include the following: (a) WIScience, (b) Academic Planning & Institutional Research (APIR), (c) the Registrar's Office, (d) the Writing Center, (e) University Housing/Residential Life, (f) Madison Teaching & Learning Excellence (MTLE), (g) the Teaching Academy, (h) the College of Letters & Science (L&S) Equity and Diversity Committee, and (i) the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER). We are continuing to seek endorsement from other campus units.

Follow-up session

During the Winter/Spring of 2015 we will hold a follow-up session to the November workshop. Faculty and staff participants will have the opportunity to gather again and share successes and challenges around their classroom efforts. This session will provide a chance to revisit the Systems framework for course data analysis, as well as the impactful instructional practices. Key to the follow-up session will be the sense of accountability it engenders, as well as the promotion of a community on campus that is working together to address this critical issue.

ⁱ ***Education Innovation***. Goal 1: Pivot the student experience toward pervasive, active learning; Sub-point 3: Align EI-sponsored initiatives with UW-Madison's goals for diversity and inclusion, to improve learning outcomes and academic achievement for all students. <http://edinnovation.wisc.edu/category/faq/#post-1216>

ⁱⁱ ***Diversity Framework 2014***. Recommendation 1.5: Promote the use of teaching strategies and content where difference contributes to learning, and build a classroom climate that supports difference and risk-taking. Provide opportunities to learn new teaching methods, create new curriculum, adapt courses, assess effectiveness, and share with others. Provide incentives to faculty, academic staff and Teaching Assistants to build inclusive approaches and incorporate content that broadens student ability to live and work in an increasingly diverse world. Pg. 27 in http://diversityframework.wisc.edu/documents/FrameworkforDiversityMay192014_2.pdf