e-Learning Report 2014
Making a Difference for Students
Advancing Online Student Remediation
For most students, the start of their time in college or university begins with a high-stakes college entrance exam. For learners at Ocean County College this test is the Accuplacer. The test measures incoming students’ reading, writing, and/or math skills. Test results serve to indicate what courses are appropriate for the students based on their academic needs.

When Ocean County College began offering courses online, however, incoming online students were also expected to take Accuplacer. The modality of online courses require assessment efforts to consider challenges such as remote test proctoring, which can add a significant burden for the student. This posed a barrier to online students who had difficulty making arrangements for test proctoring. In some cases, students live in areas where test proctoring services are not available. Thus, remote test proctoring provide to be a barrier to the open-access market advantage that online courses offer the college.

In spring 2013, Jeff Harmon, Director of E-learning, proposed using the Pearson MyReadinessTest combined with a suite of remedial English, Math, and Student Success modules (MyFoundationsLab) designed to improve students’ learning experience through its adaptive learning capability.

Mr. Harmon recommended the MyReadinessTest and MyFoundationsLab suite to the Ocean County College executive administration who supported the 2-year pilot for both the Readiness Test as well as the Remedial suite, and with full presidential support the pilot began Fall 2013. Two Reading and Writing courses, and two Mathematics remedial courses would then begin using MyReadinessTest coupled with MyFoundationsLab.
Mr. Harmon presented the idea to the Ocean County College Executive Administration who subsequently supported the idea of a 2-year pilot for both the Readiness Test and the Remedial Suite, MyFoundationsLab. A pilot was authorized to run beginning in Fall 2013 with full Presidential support. The Readiness Test evaluates students in Algebra, Reading and Writing skills; based on the results, students can be placed in remedial Reading and Writing or Mathematics courses using MyFoundationsLab.

For the pilot project, Pearson offered to integrate their MyReadiness Test and MyFoundations Lab suite so that students have the ability to work on their assignments from within their online courses in the Learning Management System. MyReadinessTest has improved student access to online placement tests and MyFoundationsLab has shown to be a positive pedagogical tool for online instructors and students, in that the suite allowed instructors to spend more time providing quality feedback and mentoring to their students.

Once enrolled in a remedial course, students are to purchase an access code from the Ocean County College Bookstore (also available online) which gives them a full-year access for both remedial Reading & Writing I and II, and Introduction to Algebra I and II. That is, one access code for two remedial English or Math courses which is approximately one third of the cost of the textbooks prior to using MyFoundationsLab. Financially, this option is more attractive to students.
Using MyFoundationsLab (MFL), OCC hoped to bring more students to successful completion of their remedial coursework. The MFL tool helps students learn more effectively through the adaptive learning technology and competency-based model provided. Upon entrance into the MFL system, students encounter a series of pre-tests which gauge their master of core competencies. Following each pre-test, students complete learning modules aimed at augmenting their skills and they complete each section with a post-test.

In July 2013, the MyFoundationsLab suite was successfully integrated within the eCollege Learning Management System. Jeff Harmon and his team of e-Learning advisors, system administrators, and instructional designers created a plan to prepare online instructors and students for a successful teaching and learning experience. In this plan, e-Learning advisors would inform the students about the materials required and how to purchase one access code for both Reading & Writing I and II, and another for Introduction to Algebra I and II. In addition, the LMS administrator in collaboration with Pearson’s designated MFL support liaison began to test the settings and synchronization of scores with eCollege.

MyFoundationsLab offers many advantages over more traditional testing models that can be leveraged to achieve greater student success. For example, with immediate feedback the student has the ability to identify if he or she has mastered a competency and have a chance to identify the areas where they performed poorly. Also, included in the MyFoundationsLab remedial courses were online tutoring services, pre-tests, practice assignments, interactive multimedia content, and post-tests; all of these features aligned with the Course Learning Objectives.
The first cohort of online adjuncts that volunteered to teach the pilot remedial courses were required to attend a one-hour webinar training conducted by Mr. Harmon. During the term, an instructional designer, with assistance provided by Pearson, was assigned to this unique cohort to support remedial instructors with any questions they might have.

In fall 2013, the first pilot group of remedial courses (Reading & Writing I, Reading & Writing II, Introduction to Algebra I, and Introduction to Algebra II) utilizing MyFoundationsLab (MFL) began running.

Frequent “office hours” were held online by support staff exclusively for online remedial instructors where they could bring their questions on the dynamics and technologies integral to the success of their courses. In the end of that Fall semester, a number of webinars were held to assist online instructors with grading.

The Dean of e-Learning Faculty was also closely involved in addressing instructor and student questions, issues emerging on grading, active participation, and feedback.

In fall 2015, the 2-year pilot phase of MyFoundationsLab in remedial online course will conclude, and the college will then continue a two-year longitudinal study to assess student performance in college level English and college-level Math courses.
Currently, students assessment data compared between Spring 2013 (the term prior to piloting MFL) and Spring 2014, resulted in the numbers presented in the following paragraphs.

In spring 2013, six (6) English courses with 115 students enrolled and eight (8) Math courses with 163 students ran traditional remedial courses. Students grades in English courses averaged 68.37%, and Math 63.64%.

In fall 2013 - Nine (9) English courses with 162 students enrolled and eight (8) Math sections with 170 students began piloting MyFoundationsLab. English averages were 64.33%, and Math 73.88%. An improvement had already been noticed in the Math averages of approximately ten percent. A slight dip in the English averages of about four percent took place that semester.

In spring 2014, the results presented themselves more evidently. Eight (8) English courses ran with 128 students and nine (9) Math courses had a total of 153 students enrolled. As of May 14, 2014, the final averages were 85.47% in English courses and 85.37% in Math.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR STUDENTS
DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Table 1 - Online Remedial Students Averages per Term

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>Remedial English</th>
<th>Remedial Math</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013 (pre-MFL)</td>
<td>68.37%</td>
<td>63.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013 (MFL-pilot)</td>
<td>64.33%</td>
<td>73.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2014 (MFL-pilot)</td>
<td>85.47%</td>
<td>85.37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2 - Growth of Online Remedial Students Averages per Term

- ENGL %
- MATH %
Office hours are held with the remedial instructors where they bring their feedback and concerns about their classes. The most commonly reported faculty concern, during the initial stages of the pilot, were with the remedial course schedule. Due to the pedagogical approach with this adaptive learning software, students don’t have a set schedule to follow. That is one of the main concerns that was addressed during Spring 2014 where a significant improvement was noticed in both English and Math course averages.

At the end of each term, the data relative to the courses is reviewed to see how many students are successfully completing the courses. While the numbers are still growing, the factors that contribute to students’ successful completion are currently being identified. As of spring 2014, one online adjunct had an highly successful completion rate of 16 students out of 18. The feedback shared by the adjunct follows:

“I am relentlessly reminding them to complete their work! They deserve all the credit. It’s all about effort, and most of them were very conscientious and did their work in a timely manner. Now that I'm much more comfortable and acclimated on Pearson, I love it! It makes things so much easier!” (OCC E-learning Adjunct)

Also, the MFL gradebook is designed to assist course professors in identifying students that are shy of just a couple of exercises to successful completion. If instructors have exhausted their attempts to contact these students they, then, reach out to e-Learning advising to start the process of intervention. The student is then contacted by his or her assigned academic advisor who individually encourages that student complete his or her coursework.
In each course, a Student Success module is also included with the MyFoundationsLab (MFL) suite. The module covers time management skills, studying skills such as note taking, reading effectively, and other career readiness skills, and is currently being evaluated if it should become an auxiliary course in itself.

The possibilities emerging from the use of MyFoundationsLab in remedial online courses are many. The end of OCC’s learning curve is still nowhere in sight. From the ability to identify students at risk, encourage faculty to use the tool as a means to provide better and more timely feedback and mentoring, and to collect important assessment data in accordance with best practices, the results presented thus far have shown a significant of overall improvement in learning effectiveness and the success of OCC’s online remedial students.

Following the longitudinal study the college will make a determination of efficacy and viability for this program and, if deemed successful, the college will consider full-scale implementation.

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President