Greater academic success for all

Award-winning U-Pace sets a new standard for online learning
Overview

In the US, only 58% of full-time undergraduate students enrolled in four-year institutions for the first-time will complete their degree or certificate program within six years. Rates are even lower for students from Hispanic, African American, and American Indian/Alaskan Native backgrounds.¹

U-Pace has the potential to change that. An innovative new approach to online learning created at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)—an urban doctoral university with over 28,000 undergraduates—U-Pace is proven to increase academic success.

For its extraordinary contribution to teaching and learning through U-Pace, UWM won the 2013 Desire2Excel Award for Impact.

"D2L has been there along the way to help us work through any glitches. It has been a terrific collaboration, that’s for sure."
Diane Reddy, Professor of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

¹ U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics website

AT A GLANCE
Client University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Students 28,000 Undergraduates
Level Undergraduate
Solutions Brightspace Online and Blended Learning Solution

CHALLENGE
• Facilitate greater student success across all disciplines and universities
• Reduce the academic gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged learners

SOLUTION
• Access and act on learning analytics
• Empower students with the perception of control
• Maintain personal touch and motivation even on a large scale

RESULT²
• 69.8% of U-Pace learners vs. 27.9% of conventional learners earned As and Bs
• 69.2% of U-Pace low income learners vs. 21.6% of conventional low income learners earned As and Bs
• U-Pace learners study 1.2 hours more per week
• 6 months after the course, U-Pace learners scored 16% higher
HOW TO PUT A VAST SUPPLY OF KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

The good news is that learner analytics are accelerating at a time when changes to post-secondary education are badly needed. Because the Brightspace platform can track student progress, we know much more about why students succeed—and why not.

“D2L is on the forefront of advances in learner analytics,” says Diane Reddy, professor of psychology and Co-creator and Director of U-Pace Student Learning and Instructor Training. “They have predictive algorithms as well as information analytics about student engagement and student performance. But the missing piece for us has been what to do with that information. How do we use it to maximize success for students?”

With the creation of U-Pace, a technology-enabled instructional approach, UWM set out to close the critical gap between what we know about learning and helping students achieve more.

THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP OF SUCCESS AND SUPPORT

U-Pace is a new approach to online learning developed using the Brightspace platform. It combines mastery-based learning with instructor feedback called Amplified Assistance. What makes U-Pace unique is that instructors can reach out to each student personally even when the student hasn’t asked for help. Students believe that they can succeed, and that makes all the difference.

Instructor-to-student support is powerful because it’s rooted in analytics. The personalized feedback comes from a bank of email templates created by UWM that are based on analytics functionality capable of determining why students give up or fail. When instructors are signaled that students are struggling, they borrow from the templates to reach out to those students.

The feedback works hand-in-hand with the mastery component. “Students study small, manageable amounts of material at a time, and they can only move on to new content if they achieve at least a 90% on a quiz—and that requires a deep level of understanding. Students are supported in that process with Amplified Assistance, which motivates them to keep moving forward,” says Reddy.
“The potential for widespread implementation and impact is incredible. U-Pace is freely available, can be applied across disciplines, and can be implemented in virtually all colleges.”

Dylan Barth, Interim Associate Director, Learning Technology Centre, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
CONTROL MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT
In a course taught the U-Pace way, students decide when and at what rate they engage the material. As they master one unit at a time, it builds the link between their efforts and positive outcomes. They begin to develop a sense of control over their learning.

“What our research tells us is that when you feel that control, it leads to better psychological outcomes and increased persistence in the face of academic challenges. Students who don’t have a history of success often times give up prematurely. That’s why the Amplified Assistance messages are very empowering: They communicate an unwavering belief in students’ ability to succeed,” says Reddy.

BRIGHTSPACE MAKES U-PACE WORK
Much of what makes U-Pace so successful is enabled by the functionality of Brightspace technology. It’s rooted in how instructors monitor student progress—and it’s the reason U-Pace instructors can deliver timely, tailored support through Amplified Assistance.

“The conditional releases are easily set so that students can’t move on until they demonstrate mastery. You can see the number of attempts that a student has made on a quiz then the high score is recorded in Gradebook. As well, communication tools are used to monitor and respond to the students’ behavior. All of these things are done through the Brightspace platform,” says Dylan Barth, Interim Associate Director, Learning Technology Centre, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

U-PACE IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN CONVENTIONAL TEACHING
The U-Pace approach has been rigorously evaluated at multiple universities with different student populations. Again and again, findings reveal that all students demonstrate significantly greater academic success and improved learning outcomes with U-Pace than with conventional face-to-face instruction.

It also helps level the playing field: Students who are economically disadvantaged or disadvantaged from conditions associated with racial/ethnic minority status receive the support they need to achieve more. U-Pace helps to narrow the success gap with non-disadvantaged students.

“We even tested the persistence of U-Pace learning over time,” says Reddy. “We brought back students six months after the course and gave them another exam measuring core concepts. U-Pace students scored 16% higher than the conventionally taught students.”

What does it all mean? With U-Pace, students are getting more out of school, but they are also acquiring the skills needed to get more out of life.

“One of the most exciting findings is that U-Pace significantly improves students’ ability to learn how to learn. By strengthening the capacity to acquire new knowledge and competencies, U-Pace means greater personal and professional success. Wide-scale adoption of U-Pace instruction may even strengthen our nation’s economy,” says Reddy.
U-PACE AWARDS AND MILESTONES

- Winner of the 2012 Distance Education Innovation Award from the National University Technology Network for the advancement in application of technology to teaching and learning in higher education
- Subject of the largest randomized control trial evaluating an educational intervention for college students, supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2011
- Recipient of EDUCAUSE’s Next Generation Learning Challenge grant for the purpose of expanding throughout the US, 2011
- Adoptions and adaptations at 25 universities in multiple disciplines

PERCENTAGE OF PSYCH 101 STUDENTS EARNING As AND Bs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Not Low Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>U-Pace</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
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GREATER LEARNING ACROSS DISCIPLINES BY PROCTORED EXAM PERFORMANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>U-Pace</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psych 101</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
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TIME SPENT WORKING ON COURSE BY HOURS PER WEEK

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>5.3 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>U-Pace</td>
<td>6.5 hrs</td>
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Results and figures provided by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
About D2L

D2L is the software leader that makes the learning experience better. The company’s cloud-based platform—Brightspace—is not a common one-size-fits-all learning management system (LMS). It’s easier to use, more flexible, and smart. With Brightspace, you can personalize the experience for every learner to deliver real results. The company is also a world leader in learning analytics: its platform predicts learner performance so that you can take action in real time to keep them on track. Brightspace is used by learners in higher education, K–12, and the enterprise sector, including the Fortune 1000. D2L has operations in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, Brazil, and Singapore. | www.brightspace.com

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