

AQIP Action Project: Enhancing Developmental Education

Annual Update 2013-14 with HLC Review

Northwestern Michigan College

Question #1: General project status: Completed? In progress? Reopened? Suspended? Original project start date? Original project end date? Anticipated completion date if not completed? Briefly describe the current status of the project Explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's most recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio, if applicable:

In April 2014, near the end of our two-year project (chartered September 1, 2012), we realized that our foundational work was not yet complete. Some new developmental math accelerations had just been approved for the 2014-15 year, and new English initiatives were gestating; moreover, we had just begun to get some initial results for two developmental math initiatives launched the previous year (math placement boot camp and the self-paced developmental math Redesign course). Given the formative work ahead on key pilots (both streamlined and modularized developmental math courses; English ALP; and the groundwork for a multiple-measure placement pilot in English), we decided to request a one-year extension for our project, with a new target completion date of September 1, 2015. We will also use this extension to continue evaluating our developmental success rates in terms of our various initiatives and reforms.

The work of this project relates to NMC's strategic goal in Helping Students Learn, as stated in our November 2013 self-study portfolio in 1P8 (process question: "How do you deal with students who are underprepared for the academic programs and courses you offer?") and 1I1 (improvement questions: "What recent improvements have you made in this category? How systematic and comprehensive are your processes and performance results for Helping Students Learn?"). This project played an important part in NMC's overall strategic plan last year in *Helping Students Learn*, and will continue to do so in 2014-15.

REVIEW:

NMC has described a highly ambitious project, based on the success of two related projects. Much formative work has been accomplished and the institution recognizes that it needs more time to accomplish the project goals. The project has played a significant part in strategic planning which will help it to have institutional commitment in the long run.

Question #2: List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal:

As stated in our project's original declaration and its A3 for the past two years:

Project Goal

The goal of this project is to improve learner success rates in developmental education coursework.

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Outcome Measures

- Increase in course completion and success rates
- Increase persistence and completion rates
- Increase in the success rates of developmental education students moving on to college-level coursework in similar content areas

REVIEW:

Moving the project end date back will enable the college to collect more longitudinal data. Since the foundational work is still being completed, even a one-year extension might not provide enough trend data to ensure the project success. NMC may want to consider outcomes related to setting up the systems to increase student success, without abandoning the original outcomes. The measures identified are likely to show improvements as the project's foundational work is completed, but since these are longitudinal outcomes, they may not yield results within the project time frame. This is not to say abandon either the outcomes or the work of the project rather that these may not be the best measures of success given the one-year extension.

Question #3: *Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to include a discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year:*

Our original project goal has not changed, nor our outcome measures. We aim for improved course completion and success rates among our developmental students; and increased persistence and success through the “developmental pipeline” into college-level coursework. Below in #1 and #2 is a discussion of four appendices (describing quantitatively our efforts thus far) that appear at the end of this report; results for two math initiatives that have continued beyond pilot status this last year are described in #3.

1. Appendices A and B are our latest *Developmental English and Math Targets Dashboards*. In each disciplinary chart, the top three graphs show our point-in-time course completion and success rates, while the bottom three graphs show pipeline success rates. Our progress in English reflects adjustments to placement (Compass cut scores) and reforms to curriculum that have taken root over the past several years, and we hope to show further improvement, based on more recently implemented innovations (e.g., *OnCourse*, *PowerPath*). We expect our math results will begin to show improvement based not only on recently launched initiatives (e.g., math placement boot camp, Redesign) and upcoming 2014-15 pilots (i.e., streamlined 2-in-1 courses, modularized courses), but also on our math department’s recent establishment of a placement “floor” eliminating the lowest third of

students who in the past have taken MTH 08 (redirecting some toward a BRIDGE math workshop instead).

2. Appendices C and D illustrate another way we have sought to track progress on our developmental persistence goals, for MTH 08 and 23 students in particular. These recently developed “pipeline success” branches give baseline information on compliant cohorts (e.g., new/never attended students who went right into the developmental math sequence) who started in a particular fall semester (2009-2011).
3. Finally, we have begun to see some results with the math placement boot camp and self-paced developmental math Redesign course, two initiatives launched the past 1.5 years that have moved beyond pilot stage.
 - *Math placement boot camp*: Piloted in Jan 2013; our Student Success Center has run nine sessions (coinciding with four orientations) so far. Within 2013 and 2014, we offered five different sessions of boot camp.
 - Twenty-seven students signed up for boot camp, of which nineteen completed boot camp and retested (70.3%); twelve of those improved their initial placement score (63.2%), and six successfully completed the higher math into which they placed (50%). *Overall, then, of the 27 who initially signed up for boot camp, 22% successfully completed the higher math that their post-boot camp score placed them into.*
 - *Redesign math* (self-paced, flipped class, computer software taught): Piloted for fall 2013; five sections have run over three semesters so far, including a summer section.
 - *Overall, forty-one different students enrolled these past three semesters, of which twenty-six passed at least one course (63%), and three passed multiple courses.* While a few were clearly above-average math students who had let their credentials slip, most others were quite math phobic and without accomplishment or much hope for success. (Of those who didn’t make it, three students will join a new cohort this coming fall and continue on with high prospects of success for finishing their second course.) We expect better results this coming year with a better software program, higher enrollment and some experience behind us.

In the early stages of pilots and initiatives, success sometimes feels more like a matter of working the margins, helping several more students in each class or cohort, each semester, rather than impacting numbers on a sweeping scale. Yet we recognize that this is the nature of progress, demanding *our* institutional persistence and resolve, as we work to scale up results.

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REVIEW:

NMC has accomplished a great deal with this action project, but seems to be finding that the results do not measure the level of effort and the changes made. Again, this does not seem to be related to the work of the project, rather that measuring student success based on these types of changes takes more work over time. By incorporating measures of systems as well as student success, it may help the institution feel more of a sense of accomplishment. The project has clearly helped the institution to focus a considerable amount of time and energy to improve student performance which is truly commendable. Celebrate what has been accomplished and continue the work. It seems very likely that the measures or student learning improvement will show up once these systems have sufficient time to run.

Question #4: Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration, particularly during the last year:

Our committee of 15 members was comprised of 8 English and Math faculty (including the English department chair); 4 Student Support Services representatives (Director of Advising; Associate Dean for Learning Services; Coordinator for Student Success; Writing and Reading Center Coordinator); 2 Vice Presidents (of Educational Services; of Enrollment Management and Student Services); and the Executive Director of Research Planning and Effectiveness (ORPE). The project continued to be co-chaired by faculty from math and English.

This last year, we shifted to monthly full-group meetings during the academic year and two summer meetings, supplemented by regular Math and English sub-committee meetings. Sub-committees met face-to-face and via email, then reported out at monthly full-group meetings, which in turn provided timely recommendations, advice, and questions. Our new alternating cycle of full-group and sub-committee meetings allowed for greater logistical flexibility. For example, to prepare our streamlined 2-in-1-semester developmental math courses and modularized developmental math courses for 2014-15, the math faculty lead worked closely not only with his own department colleagues (both full-time and adjunct) but also with additional Student Support Services and Record and Registration staff beyond our project's membership, and the Curriculum Committee.

At full-group meetings, we also had participation from Student Success Learning Coaches (who have been instrumental in the evolution of our math placement boot camp and the preparation of our upcoming BRIDGE math skills workshop) and received data reports and demonstrations from ORPE personnel. The Math department chair, Director of Financial Aid, and Registrar have also been guests at meetings this past year.

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Project co-chairs continued to maintain a project folder on the college's shared drive, made presentations at New Faculty/Staff orientation and Opening Conference in August 2013 and 2014, and gave our written annual update to Board Members in December 2013.

REVIEW:

NMC has wide involvement from both academic and student affairs. There is clearly a strong commitment to both the Action Project and the long-term goals of improving student success.

Question #5: Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit?

This past year, the work of our project has transformed our developmental math curriculum in terms of format and delivery, capitalizing on best practices at state and national levels. From the math placement boot camp and Redesign, which have moved beyond pilot status, through our upcoming 2014-15 developmental math pilots (for streamlined 2-in-1-semester math combo and modularized courses), our lead developmental math faculty have worked to improve the completion and success rates of our students, the majority of whom test into developmental math. (It is worth noting that our upcoming developmental math pilots will be taught by full-time and adjunct faculty beyond the instructors who serve on our committee and who already teach our Redesign classes. This shows how the work of our project is scaling up beyond the faculty who are immediately involved in the design of these new initiatives.)

In English, we are looking to improve the accuracy of our placement process, by moving away from Compass testing as the sole determinant toward a multiple-measure placement model. We anticipate this to benefit not just our developmental English students, but *all* our English students. At the same time, our Spring 2015 English ALP pilot (using supplemental instruction from our Writing Reading Center staff, which we have done successfully with lower-level developmental courses) aims to improve the success rates of our upper-level developmental English students (ENG 111/11) by mixing them directly in with our first-semester-composition students (ENG 111).

All these reforms have direct impact on students who place into our developmental math and English courses (as well as tangential benefit to non-developmental students).

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REVIEW:

NMC has identified best practices that are research-based, as well as developed best practices that are local to its campus. There is a well-defined path forward for the institution to keep the level of commitment high across all groups.

Question #6: Describe the anticipated challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals:

In creating and implementing our developmental initiatives this past year, we have come to recognize the challenges posed by “marketing” and communication lapses in the academic advising loop that involves not just our advising staff but faculty advisors. We have recently begun discussing how our Math and English faculty (and indeed *all* our faculty) need to learn more about the ins and outs of academic advising (and financial aid limits on developmental education) to better serve our students. In our full-group meetings, we have recognized how “marketing” (or lack of strategic communication) can thwart our best intentions (e.g., resulting in one pilot section of streamlined developmental math being under-enrolled and hence eliminated in the context of Fall 2014 course efficiencies). We anticipate that lead developmental faculty, moving forward with initiatives, will continue to work strategically with Student Support Services to clearly explain new developmental class formats and offerings to students (and faculty advisors beyond our committee) who don’t grasp the significant implications of these developmental curriculum reforms. It is one thing to innovate the curriculum, yet another thing entirely to get students to sign up for new pilots intended to benefit and accelerate them.

REVIEW:

NMC has identified challenges and strategies to overcome them. It may be helpful for the members of this project to “market” the progress to the Executive Team or the college Board of Directors as a way to celebrate its progress. Developing specific strategies to get the word out have the potential to both improve the long-term results, but also the level of institutional support.

Question #7: In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the course of the next 12 - 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of the action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step:

To move our Action Project forward in 2014-15, we first updated the campus community on our work so far in brief presentations at two key professional development gatherings in August 2014: new faculty/staff orientation and Opening Conference. Our committee will continue our

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cycle of monthly full-group meetings and regular sub-committee work, to progress through the following tasks:

- *Fall 2014*: Run the two pilot streamlined 2-in-1 semester (7.5+7.5 weeks) developmental sections; monitor the two Redesign sections using new software/texts.
- *Fall 2014*: Run the Bridge Math workshop pilot in Student Success Center (using PLATO)
- *Fall 2014*: Continue planning for Spr 2015 2-hour incremental credit, modularized developmental math pilot
- *Fall 2014*: Continue planning for Spr 2015 ENG 111/11 ALP pilot.
- *Fall 2014-Spring 2015*: Investigate multiple-measure-placement (MMP) models for future English pilot, working with English department
- *Spring 2015*: Run the modularized developmental math pilot.
- *Spring 2015*: Run the ENG 111/11 ALP pilot (mixing 111/11 + 111 students in the same class)
- *Fall 2014-Spring 2015*: Continue to monitor and evaluate developmental completion and success data, and adjust existing developmental reforms (e.g., Redesign math, math placement bootcamps, 80% rule, *PowerPath*, ENG 107/*OnCourse*) so to improve our rates.

REVIEW:

NMC has clearly defined steps to make improvements to the curriculum and coursework, what seems to be lacking are steps to work with advising and other departments to increase student participation. Identifying goals around marketing may be helpful.

Question #8: Provide any additional information, inquiries, or concerns that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project:

This past spring, as we have analyzed developmental course completion and success rates, compared with developmental pipeline statistics, we have begun to wrestle with conflicting definitions of “success.” The current state and national climate emphasizing college completion only seems to privilege success at the level of diploma or certificate. While this emphasis is undoubtedly important in today’s economy, it may undervalue other kinds of “success” (e.g., in basic adult literacy that changes the lives of some of our most at-risk developmental students who struggle—and persevere—to complete a developmental course two levels below college-level, yet because of their impoverished skills do not successfully complete subsequent courses or make it to/through college-level coursework).

Another concern we have, in terms of evaluating our developmental “success”, is if we only look at course success rates at a given point in time (which is our current measurement, as documented by our current metrics), we may never see progress. This challenges us to

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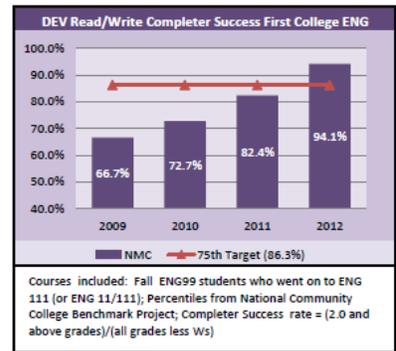
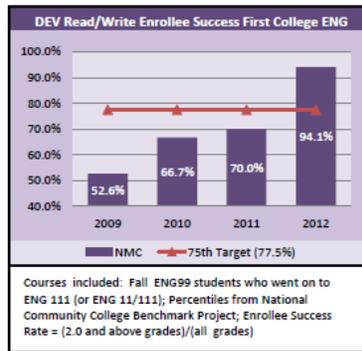
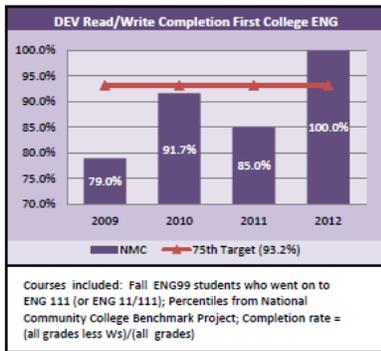
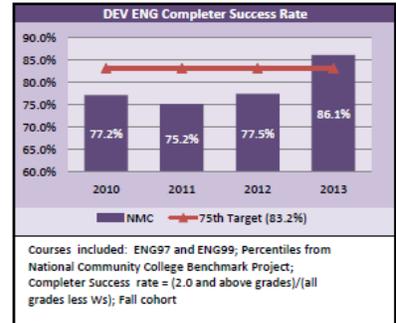
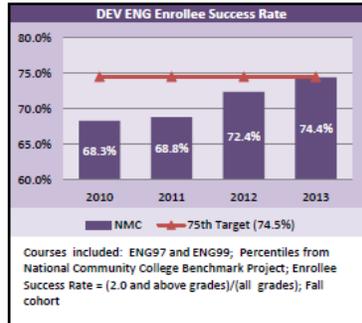
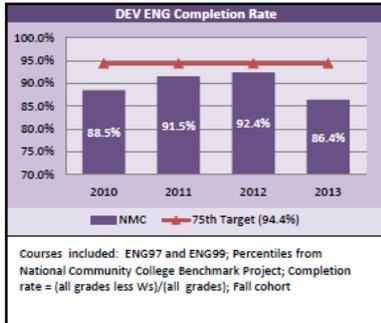
conceive of new ways to measure student progress—not just by documenting the *aggregate at a point in time*, but by tracking *specific cohorts and individual students across time*.

*Submitted 14 August 2014 by project co-chairs
Judy Chu (English Faculty) and Mark Nelson (Math Faculty)*

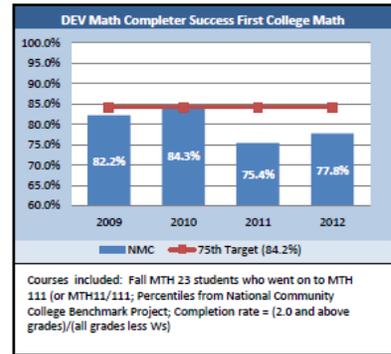
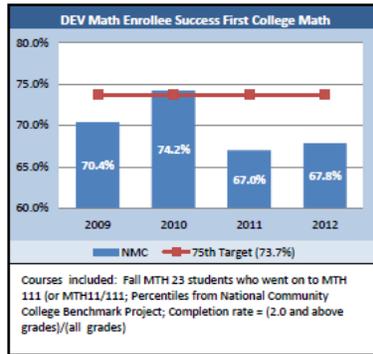
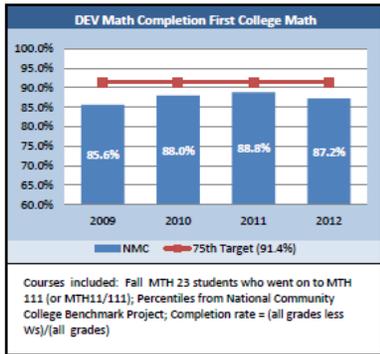
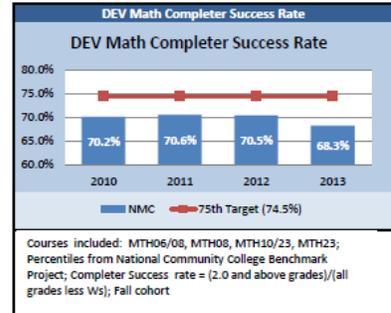
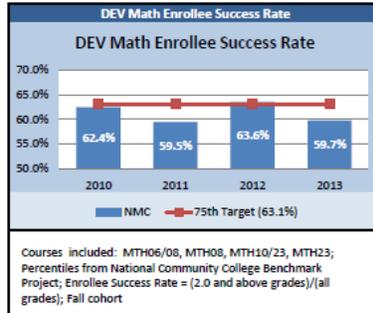
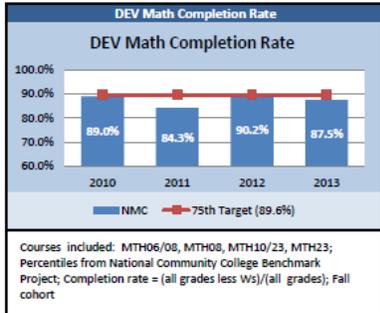
REVIEW:

These are excellent points. It may be possible to springboard these ideas into a future Action Project.

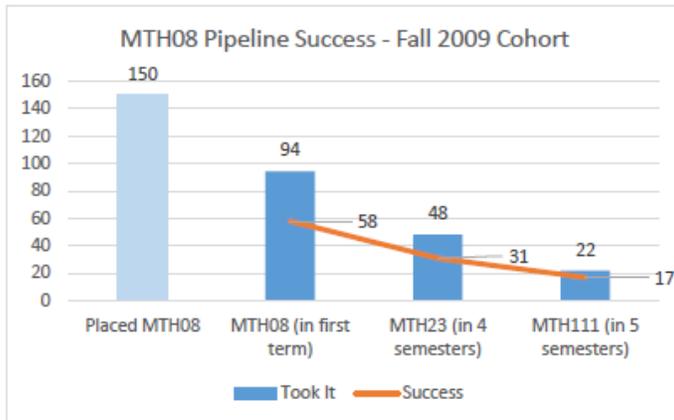
Appendix A
Developmental English (ENG97/ENG99) TARGETS Dashboard
 (version 20140304)



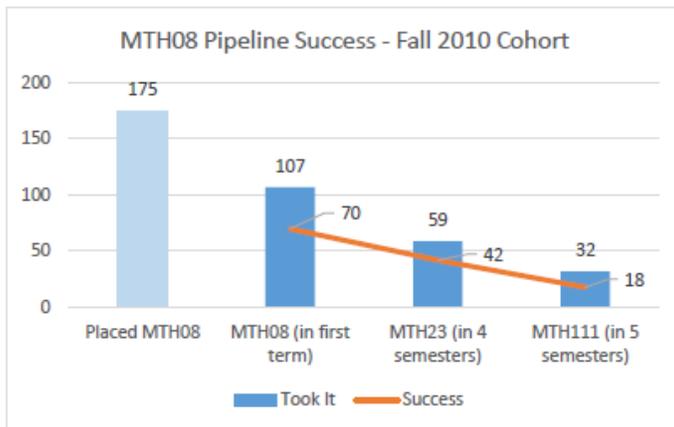
Appendix B
Developmental Math Metrics Dashboard TARGETS
 (version 20140304)



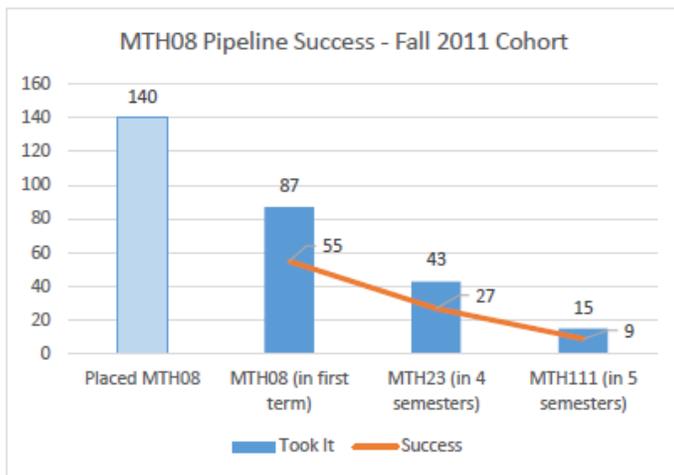
Appendix C
Pipeline Success MTH08 through MTH111
 (version 20140225)



Of the 150 new students that placed into MTH08 in fall 2009, 94 (63%) attempted MTH08 their first semester with a 62% success rate. Of the 94 that attempted MTH08 in fall 2009, 17 (18%) successfully completed MTH111 within five semesters. Of the original 150 who placed into MTH08, an additional 36 (24%) attempted MTH08 between spring 2010 and fall 2013 with a 75% success rate.



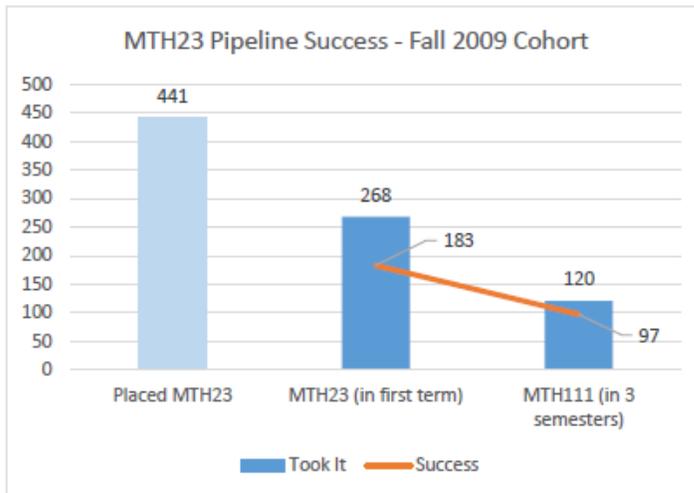
Of the 175 new students that placed into MTH08 in fall 2010, 107 (61%) attempted MTH08 in fall 2010 with a 65% success rate. Of the 107 that attempted MTH08 in their first semester, 18 (17%) successfully completed MTH111 within five semesters. An additional 42 (24%) students of the original 175, attempted MTH08 between spring 2011 and fall 2012 with a 43% success rate.



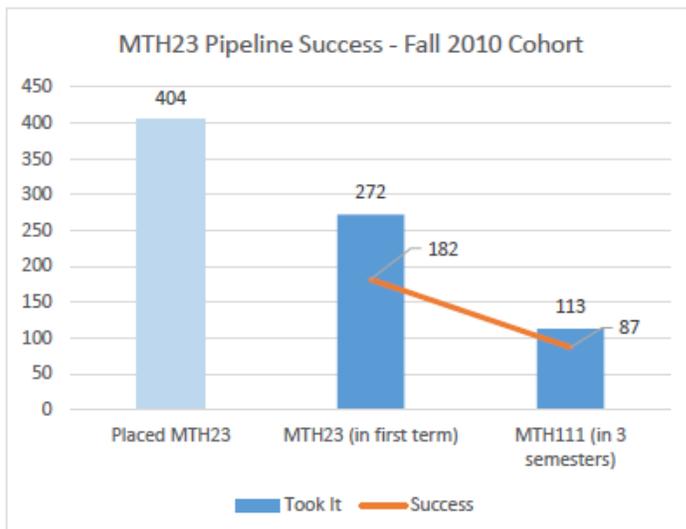
Of the 140 new students that placed into MTH08 in fall 2011, 87 (62%) attempted MTH08 in fall 2011 with a 63% success rate. Of the 87 that attempted MTH08 in their first semester, 9 (10%) successfully completed MTH111 within five semesters. Of the original 140 that placed into MTH08, an additional 33 (24%) attempted MTH08 between spring 2012 and fall 2013 with a 42% success rate.

Appendix D
Pipeline Success MTH23 through MTH111
(version 20140225)

Pipeline Success MTH23 through MTH111 (20140225)



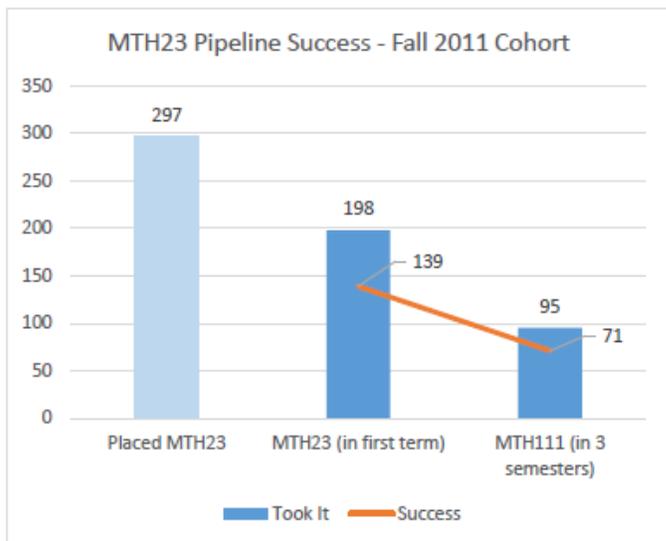
Of the 441 new students that placed into MTH23 in fall 2009, 268 (61%) attempted MTH23 their first semester with a 68% success rate. Of the 268 that attempted MTH23 in fall 2009, 97 (36%) successfully completed MTH111 within three semesters. Of the original 441 who placed into MTH23, an additional 95 (22%) attempted MTH23 between spring 2010 and fall 2013 with a 77% success rate.



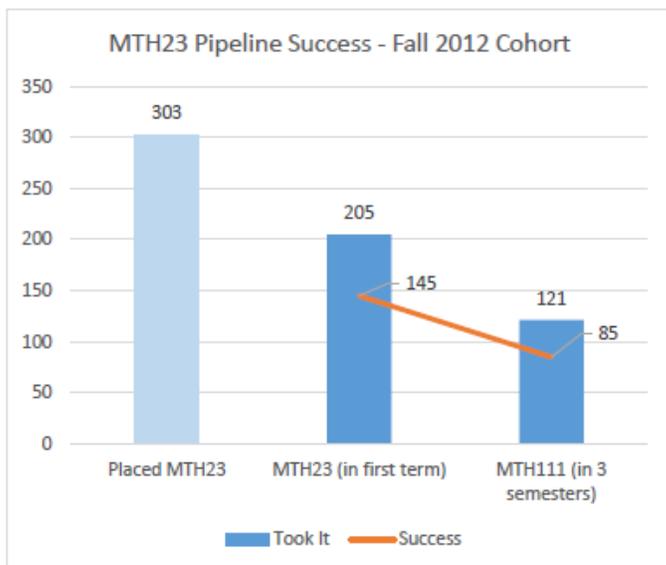
Of the 404 new students that placed into MTH23 in fall 2010, 272 (67%) attempted MTH23 their first semester with a 67% success rate. Of the 272 that attempted MTH23 in fall 2010, 87 (32%) successfully completed MTH111 within three semesters. Of the original 404 who placed into MTH23, an additional 84 (21%) attempted MTH23 between spring 2011 and fall 2013 with a 64% success rate.

Appendix D (continued)

Pipeline Success MTH23 through MTH111 (20140225)



Of the 297 new students that placed into MTH23 in fall 2011, 198 (67%) attempted MTH23 their first semester with a 70% success rate. Of the 198 that attempted MTH23 in fall 2011, 71 (36%) successfully completed MTH111 within three semesters. Of the original 297 who placed into MTH23, an additional 57 (19%) attempted MTH23 between spring 2012 and fall 2013 with a 70% success rate.



Of the 303 new students that placed into MTH23 in fall 2012, 205 (68%) attempted MTH23 their first semester with a 71% success rate. Of the 205 that attempted MTH23 in fall 2012, 85 (42%) successfully completed MTH111 within three semesters. Of the original 303 who placed into MTH23, an additional 52 (17%) attempted MTH23 between spring 2013 and fall 2013 with a 77% success rate.