# MyLab

## A Perfect Match: How UMGC Leveraged MyLab to Improve Student Outcomes

### The Institution

The University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) is one of 13 institutions in Maryland and currently has the largest enrollment numbers with more than 305,000 online students world-wide, with a division in Europe, Asia, and the United States. While UMGC serves non-traditional students, they are rooted in a very traditional university system.

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## The Challenge

In 2014, UMGC decided to move away from publishers to adopting Open Educational Resources (OER) to ease the financial burden for students. Then in 2018 there was a state-wide initiative to reduce or eliminate developmental math as a pre-requisite. At this time, John Beyers, Math and Statistics Program Director/instructor, partnered with Tiffany DePriter, Statistics Coordinator/instructor, to investigate reducing the number of prerequisites for college algebra and statistics courses. Because OERs poorly supported students not yet ready for college level courses they decided to use an adaptive resource that allowed for differentiation in a way that did not overburden faculty.

> *Our department needed to support students who weren't ready, or who were at different levels of [college] readiness. They need to all be at the same end point at the end of the term, and some were way behind and others way ahead. [MyLab] is a tool that enables you to manage such a wide range of readiness in a single course.*
>
> – John Beyers

## The Solution

With the support of UMGC leaders, John and Tiffany chose to pilot MyLab and ALEKS across a few sections in their general education courses and compare them to one another and OERs. According to John there were "early indications that MyLab was going to shine as it exceeded success rates in the other two courses."

In addition to this early indicator of success, MyLab was chosen for further piloting because they preferred MyLab's continuous assessment approach rather than ALEKS customized work plan based off a Knowledge Check that is completed prior to starting the course.

> "The design of MyLab is more fluid in allowing us to check how students are doing along the way as opposed to strictly at the very beginning of the course." – Tiffany DePriter

In 2018, the university decided they would cover the cost of a solution to mitigate the financial burden passed on to students. As such, John and Tiffany needed

evidence proving MyLab was the best solution for their students. To justify the investment, they compared MyLab to OER in a pilot they ran for two and a half years. The pilot included approximately 12 instructors, 3,000 college algebra students and 3,500 statistics students. The instructors met frequently to revise the way they utilized MyLab to better suit their needs, their students' needs, and their course goals.

> " *During that two and a half years we were piloting, we didn't just start with a certain model and then carry that through. We really spent a lot of time with a group of instructors so with each iteration of the course it grew, it became better. As we learned more about the MyLab, we tried to integrate more of the functionality into the pilot courses.* – Tiffany DePriter "

With the assistance of a colleague, they developed a homework sequence called "Ready, Set, Go!" Ready is a prerequisite assignment and based on the results, homework (i.e. Set) is customized to include concepts students struggled with in Ready. Students must receive 80% in statistics and 70% in college algebra on their homework (i.e. Set) to open Go, which is the graded part of the homework and includes instructor picked questions that are consistent for all students.

> "With the natural sequence of the Ready assignment, which is a prerequisite, the Set assignment, which is skill building, and then the Go, a graded and comprehensive homework for the week, they are definitely better prepared."
> – John Beyers

## The Impact

Ultimately, John and Tiffany were able to show UMGC leadership that MyLab was the right solution for them. They decided to do a full roll out in their statistics and college algebra courses and reported seeing positive outcomes since using MyLab, including a substantial increase in student success (I.e., 60% to 80% in statistics and 50% to 80% in algebra) over OERs.

> " *There were so many As and Bs and it was a direct result of the functions and the features that the students have access to in MyLab. It made a world of difference when I look back at how well they were doing with the open resources to now. It's a completely different end result for them. The whole process is different. They're less stressed. They like it more, they find more relevance in what they're doing, and they can take ownership of their learning from day one through to the end.* – Tiffany DePriter "

In addition to an increase in success rates, John and Tiffany said faculty evaluations have improved. Instructors are no longer bogged down with grading, which allows them to focus on the student-teacher relationship and their students' success.  In addition, MyLab offers more rich data to help instructors tailor the course to meet student needs, both as a whole and on an individual basis. According to John "MyLab has really been an asset in being able to integrate the co-requisite." Tiffany echoes his sentiments saying, "We have more opportunities to work with students one-on-one and we see a lot of faculty doing that now. I think the faculty have embraced it, and they see that the students are really benefiting from it."

While student success rates and faculty engagement are of the utmost importance to John and Tiffany, UMGC leaders were also interested in the return on investment. The two-and-a-half-year pilot provided them the data they needed to see that students were in fact returning to UMGC at higher rates.

"Students were more likely to return for another class with us, not just math, but in general, up to three semesters out. So, in other words, happy students are returning students, and they were very happy with the experience they had in MyLab."

– John Beyers
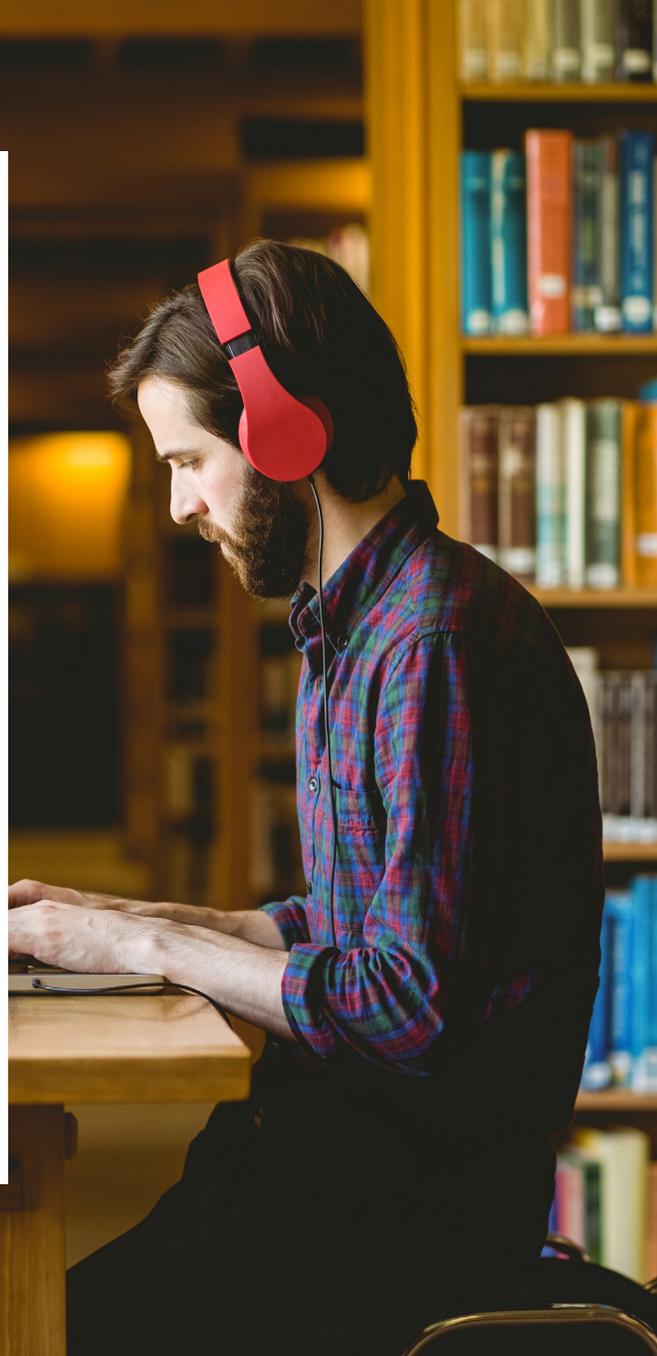
In addition, Tiffany feels students have a clear understanding of their learning path, what is expected of them and how they are progressing in MyLab.

> I do remember with ALEKS there was a lot of negative comments where students couldn't manage their time throughout the week because they didn't know when they could reach the end goal… I think they just felt that it was really grinding them too much, and it prevented them from seeing the end picture, and that's just not an issue at all with MyLab.

## What's next

With regard to the MyLab courses Tiffany and John have created for UMGC, John says they are "pretty close to perfection as far as what we need." As such, UMGC plans to continue using MyLab for their college algebra and statistics courses indefinitely.

John would recommend MyLab over OERs "one thousand percent" because of the variety of available resources, the reduction in administrative burden which increases faculty engagement, proven student success, and the positive return on investment.

## Learn more about MyLab

Learn more about how MyLab could benefit your course by visiting: https://mlm.pearson.com/northamerica/