



M State English instructor Paul Carney



**M**State is piloting up2U, a program that will allow us to shift our focus away from results designed to satisfy accountability requirements toward more purposeful, sustained engagement in learning.

The up2U program addresses some of the risk factors inherent among many community college students. But unlike many programmatic attempts at identifying and addressing pre-identified risk factors, up2U targets the core values and foundational perils of our students. While focusing on high-risk student cohorts, the program motivates students to achieve beyond expectation by offering long-term financial benefits directly correlating to persistence and performance.

up2U is the culminating vision of Paul Carney's 2011-2012 sabbatical project that involved a series of focused, deliberate conversations among a cross-disciplinary group of community college faculty representing multiple campuses from the MnSCU system.

While Paul's initial objective for his sabbatical was to develop a comprehensive assessment instrument to measure core learning outcomes upon completion, the conversations led to shaping a project design that not only measures core competencies but also supports student learning, motivation, persistence and completion.

According to Paul, the core of up2U is a competency-based transfer tuition reduction for students at the two-year college who complete either a two-year

degree or the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum with a minimum GPA of 2.0. In addition, students seeking to earn the tuition reduction for their junior year at a MnSCU university would be required to:

- Apply for transfer to a MnSCU university for the successive calendar semester
- Take the Collegiate Learning Assessment+ upon completion at the two-year college
- Enroll in a MnSCU university for the successive calendar semester
- Maintain at least a 2.5 GPA during the first two semesters at the receiving MnSCU university

Further, the project is designed to resolve the apparent tension between maintaining academic rigor and increasing completion rates, two seemingly incompatible institutional objectives. up2U is a model founded on the premise that student persistence and institutional retention are hollow metrics without evidence of learning at critical junctures along the way.

While the competency-based transfer tuition reduction is the "carrot" designed to induce and sustain student motivation, the success of up2U depends largely on a



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series of performance task workshops, targeted and timely academic interventions, and data collection "check points" designed to:

- Clarify and reinforce performance-based/problem-based teaching strategies designed to facilitate student learning of core outcomes
- Track student performance on formative and summative CLA+ assessments
- Provide targeted, timely academic interventions to students based on results of formative assessments
- Increase patterns of semester-to-semester persistence and retention
- Increase rates of degree completion and vertical transfer to university

M State is piloting the up2U assessment during April on the Moorhead and Fergus Falls campuses. Paul will be coordinating the assessment process with 125 students who will be transferring or graduating this spring. The results of the pilot project will be shared with all faculty during the college's fall duty days. Please contact Paul if you have questions or would like to become involved in the up2U project.