

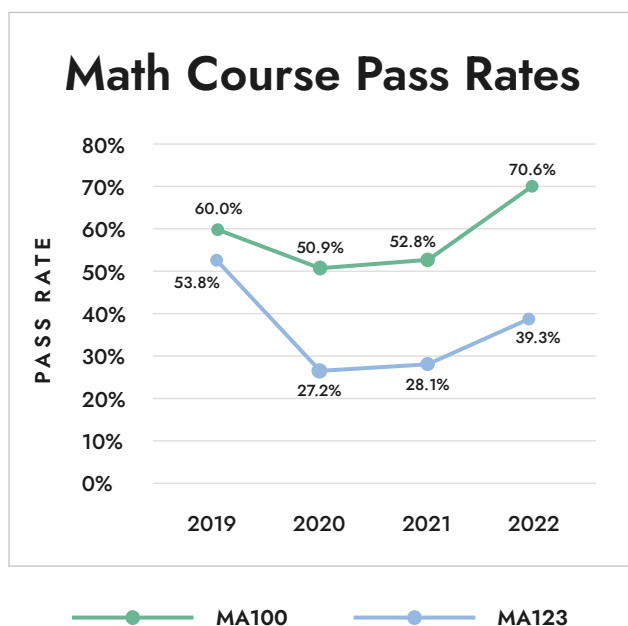
SUCCESS STORY

Modernizing Math: Raising Pass Rates and Building Faculty Engagement at Mississippi University for Women



The Situation

In 2018, the Mississippi University for Women received a Title III grant from the federal government to strengthen their developmental math courses. Two years later, in 2020, the global pandemic fueled a large drop in math course pass rates. Post-pandemic, in 2022, **MA100 - Intermediate Algebra** more than recovered, but pass rates in **MA123 - Statistics**, a course important for nursing and business majors, stayed low.



Administrators knew that significant change was required, the type of change that is challenging for all impacted stakeholders. Since the Title III grant allowed funding for faculty professional development, MUW sought outside help to increase pass rates and improve the student experience in college-level math courses. Administrators knew that significant change was required, the type of change that is challenging for all impacted stakeholders. Since the Title III grant allowed funding for faculty professional development, MUW sought outside help to increase pass rates and improve the student experience in college-level math courses.

“If you’re failing more students than you’re passing, that’s a problem for retention; that’s a problem for enrollment.”

David Brooking, Executive Director of Enrollment Management

Connecting with Almy Education

In the Spring of 2021, Almy Education began working with Manchester University, providing the external voice and perspective they needed to make lasting and positive change with their math program. Throughout the calendar year, Almy Education engaged with a cross-campus team to implement new methods for placement, scheduling, and advising for incoming students. In the spring and summer of 2022, Kathy Almy worked specifically with math faculty to roll out the redesigned developmental and corequisite math courses in fall 2022.

1

Increased retention and graduation rates for students who have traditionally placed in developmental math.

2

Increased faculty engagement.

3

Modernized math instruction and assessment to support students.

“The biggest challenge is the resistance of faculty... [Kathy] was fabulous. She really had to buy in. She built trust with them. And of course, we have great results because of it.”

Kelly Hollowell,
Intermediate Mathematics Developer | Student Success Center

Engaging Faculty

Starting in April 2022, Kathleen was challenged to engage faculty in modernized math instruction and assessment. She focused faculty professional development around the book “Keeping Students Engaged” by Christine Harrington. The book encourages rethinking traditional teaching practices and supports improved teaching strategies that are grounded in research. In monthly follow up sessions, faculty reported how they used suggestions from the book and how these changes were received by students. In this way, there was accountability for implementing suggestions and a path for incremental change.

During the monthly sessions, there were occasional disagreements with ideas found in the book. But Kathleen emphasized that any disagreement is a point for discussion. **With her unique approach, Kathleen was able to encourage faculty buy-in to the change process.**

“[Kathy] took the ideas that were in that book and asked how we could implement them. The research and the methods that were in the book, backed by facts, really helped [the faculty] to buy into what she was saying. If somebody disagreed with it, they weren’t disagreeing with Kathy, it was a discussion point.”

Kelly Hollowell,

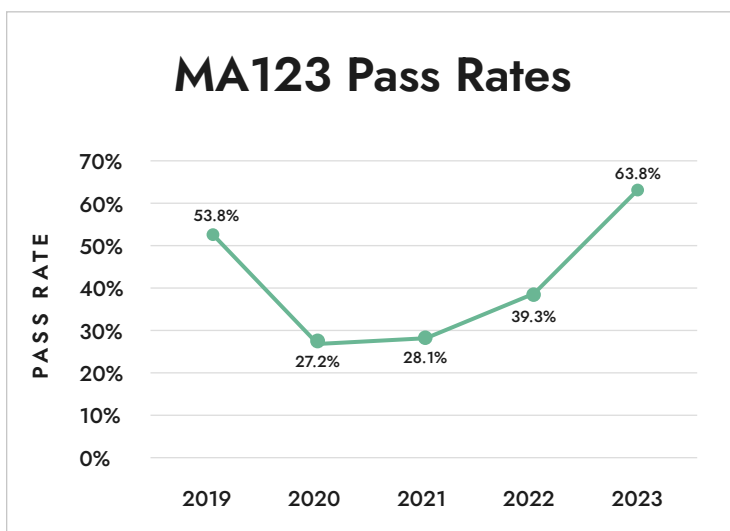
Intermediate Mathematics Developer | Student Success Center

The Results

Kathleen Almy was brought to MUW with the intent to increase pass rates in **MA123 - Statistics**. **And indeed, the pass rates in 2023 (63.79%) surpassed pre-pandemic levels (53.80%) while maintaining course rigor.**

There were improvements seen in other math classes as well. As Kelly Hollowell, Intermediate Mathematics Developer, Student Success Center stated: “[Students] seem to be more engaged and more receptive. I think it’s probably in response to changes that the faculty are making.”

As a result of Kathleen’s involvement, there is now a proven culture of support for struggling students with improved teaching strategies. Kelly Hollowell is using the strategies learned from Kathleen to keep the momentum of continuous improvement with monthly faculty meetings focused on discussions rather than disagreements about teaching strategies. Kathleen changed the culture of the math department and of college math teaching for the better with the results of increased student success.



“I cannot say enough good things about Kathy. She is just great to work with, so helpful. She’s not afraid to push back when she knows that it’s important, but she also knows when to pick your battles.”

Kelly Hollowell, Intermediate Mathematics Developer | Student Success Center

“We were able to make changes across the board, not just in Statistics, but in College Algebra and in the developmental math courses. That’s going to pay dividends for several years.”

David Brooking, Executive Director of Enrollment Management



Getting Started With Your Gateway Redesign

If your institution is exploring how to redesign gateway courses or ready to lead broader transformation, Almy Education is here to help. Our expert-led sessions prioritize faculty engagement and momentum, paving the way for collaborative redesign that drives student completion and institutional success. Whether launching your first initiative or scaling existing reforms, you'll leave with a strategic blueprint for advancing your gateway course redesign and sustaining positive impact even after our engagement ends.

 almyeducation.com/getstarted

