

CASE STUDY

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Eliminates Equity Gaps Among Completion Grant Recipients

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Public Research University in Milwaukee, WI

- **About:** The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) is a public research university with a total enrollment of 24,029, a 75% retention rate and a 47% six-year graduation rate.
- **Challenge:** As a part of EAB’s [Moon Shot for Equity](#) initiative, UWM sought to eliminate equity gaps in retention and graduation. However, financial hurdles created a barrier to completion for many students who were otherwise in good academic standing. Moreover, these barriers disproportionately impacted students who are first-generation and/or low-income, as well as under-represented minority students (URM), including Black, Hispanic and multi-racial students.
- **Solution:** UWM piloted a completion grant program to award eligible students with 90+ credits a one-time grant to address small registration-preventing balances.
- **Impact:** Grant recipients completed at a higher rate. There were no equity gaps in retention or graduation between non-URM and URM students who received the grant, compared to the control group which had a 16.1% gap in retention/graduation.

Impact Highlights

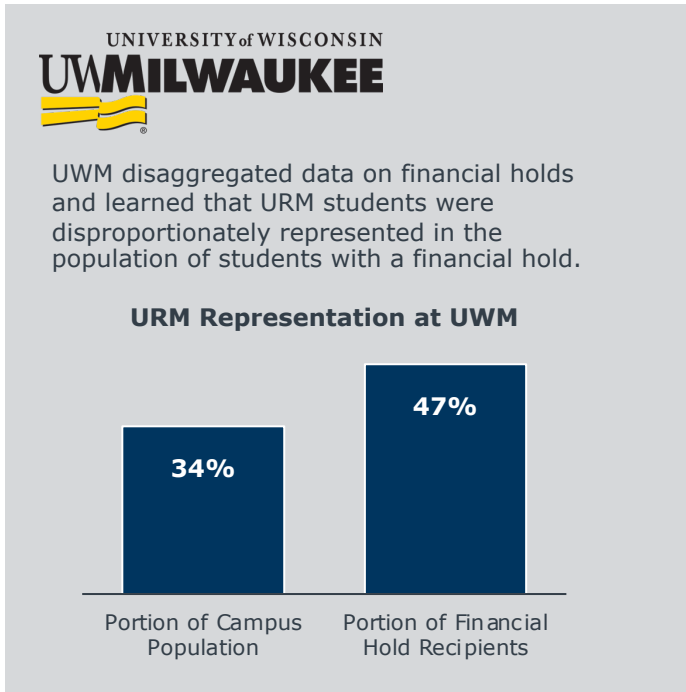
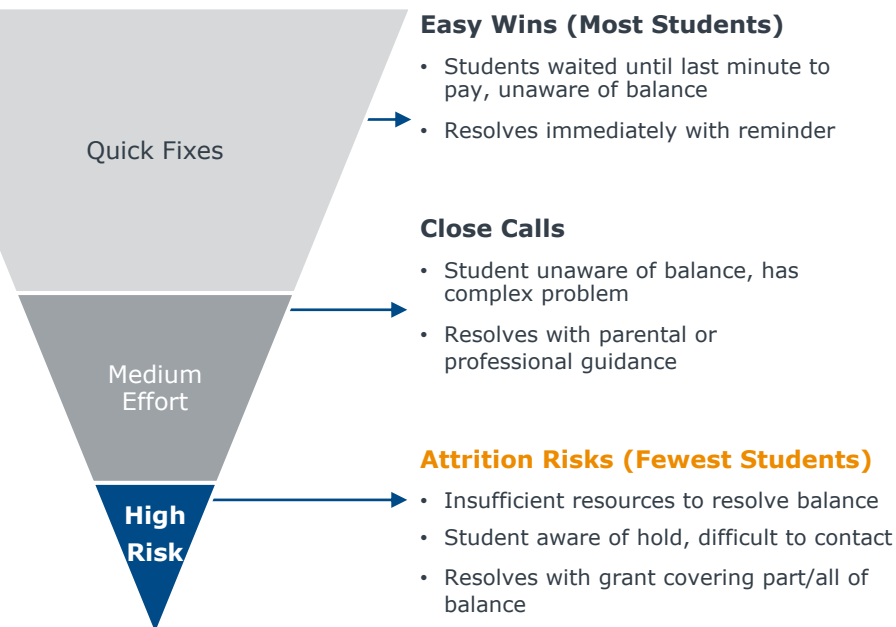
16.1
Percentage point gap in retention/graduation rate between URM students and their peers that was eliminated for grant recipients

1.7
Percentage-points higher retention and graduation for URM grant recipients than their peers

Understanding Which Students are Most Impacted by Holds

Align Retention Grant Programs with Proactive Hold Resolution Initiatives

The Universe of Unpaid Balances



Reducing Red Tape in Grant Distribution Through Clear Eligibility Criteria

Resolving Balances for Students in Need

Student Eligibility Criteria

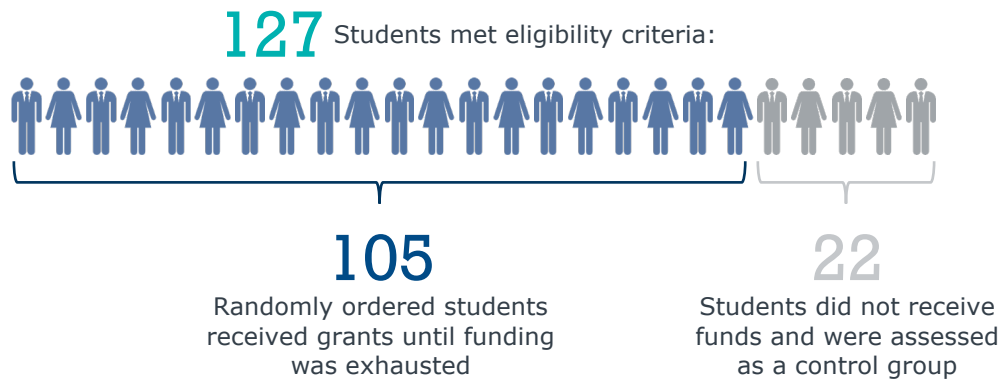
- ✓ Full-time status
- ✓ Enrolled (and not graduating) in current term
- ✓ >2.5 GPA
- ✓ 90+ cumulative credits (or 30+ for associate degree)
- ✓ Degree-seeking
- ✓ Not discontinued from program
- ✓ Outstanding balance between \$1,500 and \$6,500 (above threshold preventing registration)

Through their Moon Shot partnership with EAB and the other institutions in their region, UWM identified the best opportunities for addressing equity gaps, including deploying retention grants. They sourced \$250,000 in annual institutional funding for this effort, with \$121,131 allocated to the Fall term.

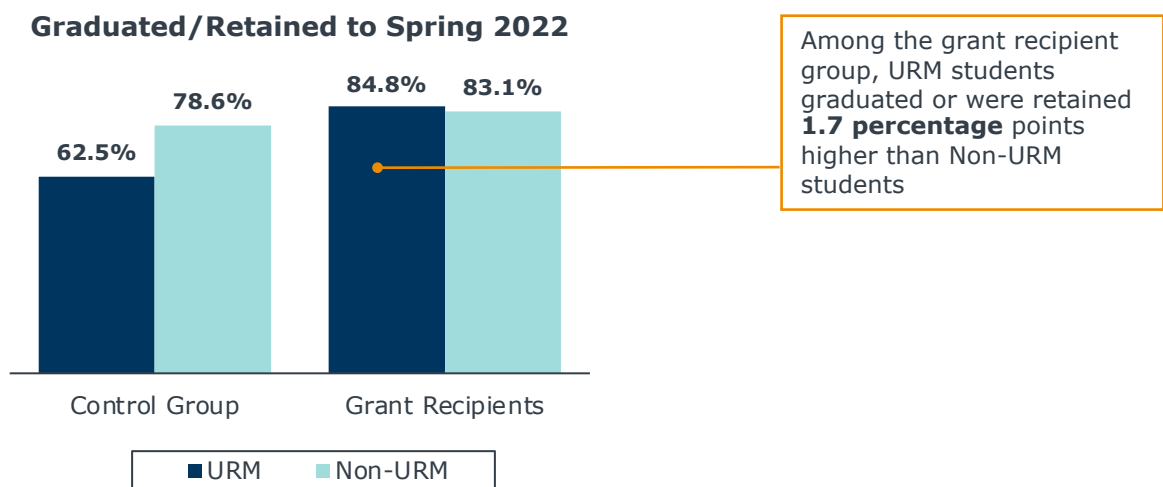
In Fall 2021, UWM pulled a list of eligible students after the deadline for the second installment of payment plans passed. UWM then randomly assigned each eligible student a number. Student #1 was awarded funding up to \$5,000 to resolve their registration-preventing balance, followed by Student #2, and so forth until all funds were exhausted.

Reduced Red Tape:

- ✗ No application or action required by student to be considered
- ✓ Initiated by UWM and automatically awarded to eligible students



Results: Eliminated Gaps for Grant Recipients



“We have a moral imperative to end inequities. By awarding completion grants, we can directly address small financial gaps that pose large barriers for our students”

Dr. Mark Mone
Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee