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Assessing and addressing students' calculus readiness

The largest first-year university courses contain the most diverse audiences. Regardless of how universities filter incoming students into their respective calculus courses (based on their high school grades, their intended major, etc), each course still contains a wide variety of students in terms on their level of preparation. Yet, the students enrolled in the same calculus course will all be given the same materials and same resources, independently of what their precalculus knowledge might be. One thing we can do is provide students with an opportunity to self-assess their precalculus skills and, if possible, address holes in their knowledge.

In this session, I will describe the process of creation, implementation and analysis of a Calculus Readiness Test. I will share the results of running this type of assessment in two different postsecondary institutions: we will examine the topics that this assessment covers as well as students' performance on various questions. We will then discuss the resources we can provide to students seeking additional help with precalculus review. Finally, I will demonstrate how such a test can be used to identify groups of students at high risk of failing their respective calculus course.