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Access to Success in Math: Lessons learned and new directions for the University of Manitoba's Access Program

The goal of the University of Manitoba Access Program is to support students who face barriers (academic, personal, financial) to success in a post-secondary environment. Most of our students (90%) are self-declared Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) and many (60%) are from communities outside the city of Winnipeg. Transition to university is a major challenge for all students, including those in the Access Program. In this talk, I will describe some of the typical attributes of Access Program students – their academic background, preparation level, and academic goals. I will then focus on academic challenges of Access Program students in first-year math and sciences courses. I will discuss outcomes of Access Program students relative to the general student population in some of the more popular science courses, and summarize the impressions of academic advisors, personal counsellors, and instructors who have worked with students directly. There is a strong need for more supports for Access Program students in math, including increased pre-university preparation, and transition support specific to math success. I will end by discussing some new initiatives in the Access Program designed to increase student success in math.