

## UMBC Check My Activity (CMA) Feedback Tool for Students

UMBC's Check My Activity (CMA) feedback tool attempts to solve the problem of scaling student responsibility for learning by allowing them to compare their own Learning Management System (LMS) activity to an anonymous summary of course peers. If instructors use the LMS grade book, students can also compare their own activity with peers earning the same, higher or lower grade on any assignment. Why might they want to do so? Since 2007, UMBC students earning a D or F have used our LMS about 40% less than students earning a C or higher. Every semester. Basically, the CMA complements UMBC's robust LMS adoption by nudging students toward self-regulated learning that can help scale student success. For a brief demo, see <http://tinyurl.com/umbccmademo>.

### Results

The CMA leverages our Blackboard LMS used by 95% of all students, 87% of all instructors and 82% of all course sections. While only 54% of UMBC students actually use the CMA, they are about 1.5 times more likely to earn a C or better final grade or 2.0 term GPA compared to peers who do not use the CMA ( $p < .001$ ). Also, when asked what the CMA showed students about their LMS activity, more than 40% of nearly 200 student respondents to an opt-in survey since 2008 have said they were "surprised how my activity compared to peers," 25% said "it confirmed what I already know about my own activity," and 17% said "I would need to use it more to determine its usefulness." Also, more than 60% of respondents said they would be "more inclined" to use the CMA before future assignments are due, which we interpret as an indicator of students' willingness to take more responsibility for their own learning. Finally, women are more than twice as likely to report using the CMA than men.

### Innovation

There are three reasons why the CMA is at least efficient and likely effective for actual users:

1. *Self-regulation*: Research by Zimmerman on self-regulated learning and Bandura on self-efficacy show that a discrepancy in how we see ourselves compared to peers can spur a change in awareness, motivation and behavior. Nobody learns from a position of comfort.
2. *Scaling Feedback*: Without burdening faculty to assign and grade more student work, the CMA can amplify the feedback effect of existing assignments, especially before a term's add/drop date when students need to self-assess their likelihood of success.
3. *Course Design*: A recent predictive modeling pilot that was 87% accurate by week 4 of the FA16 term showed that faculty use of the LMS grade book was *the* most important factor in predicting UMBC students who earned a C or better final grade in Fall 2016. These findings echo research by Educause showing students value checking their grades more than any other LMS function.

### Conclusion

It may not be new, but the LMS leaves a data trail making "classroom walls that talk" about who's engaged *during* a given term, when its not too late for a change in student behavior to make a difference. If faculty assign and grade student work, the CMA can help nudge students into a greater sense of awareness and responsibility for their own learning. True, we can only lead a horse to water, but the CMA could be a way to "put salt in the oats," as Maryellen Weimer recalls a colleague's twist of this familiar metaphor of student success. "The horse who has had salt put in his oats does not have to be forced to drink. He is thirsty, knows he is thirsty, and is looking for water."