

UWWM TODAY

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“READ ALL ABOUT IT!”

How UWM's Access to Success initiative is helping two journalism students realize their dreams



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ACCESS TO SUCCESS

By Beth Stafford

After being admitted to UWM, Brandy Riley had some doubts.

"I was a little bit nervous about my studies," she admits. "I knew that this was a totally different ball game than high school. I knew that the work load would be different, and I knew that my responsibilities as an individual and a student were going to change.

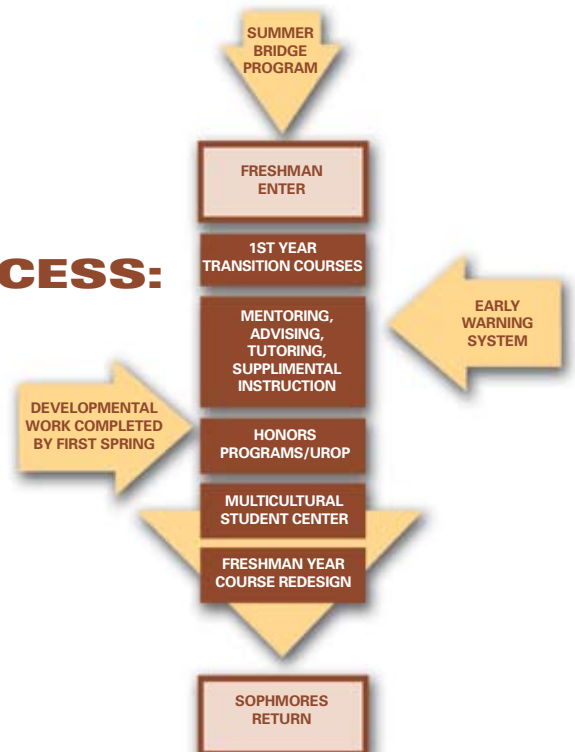
"I wondered if I would be able to adjust, and I worried if I would be able to manage."

Not only did she "manage" – she made the Dean's Honor List in the College of Letters and Science last fall.

As Riley was making the Dean's List, freshman Megan McAvoy was taking her mentor's advice: Seek out your teachers during their office hours.

She credits extra help in English 102 with helping her qualify for Honors College, where undergraduates study in small, seminar-style classes.

ACCESS TO SUCCESS: THE FIRST YEAR



BRANDY RILEY

A PROGRAM WITH IMPACT

Tools for success

The tools Riley and McAvoy needed to build successful college careers were ready and waiting at UWM. The two young women demonstrate the “success” in the university’s Access to Success initiative.

“Access to Success is the campus blueprint to enhance access to UWM while also promoting student success for all entering freshmen,” says Rita Cheng, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. Launched in fall 2005, the program covers students’ complete university experience, from recruitment to graduation. Goals include:

- Building a pool of diverse, high-achieving prospective, admitted and enrolled students.
- Increasing first-year retention and performance of all freshmen.
- Decreasing the gap in first-year retention and performance between students of color and white students.
- Decreasing the gap in first-year retention and performance between students with college-level math and English skills, and those who need developmental courses.

A tale of two students

Brandy Riley entered UWM through the Academic Opportunity Center (AOC), a program that admits students who are serious about continuing their education and show academic potential for university study, but do not meet regular admission criteria.

As part of her admission through AOC, Riley enrolled in UWM’s Bridge program immediately after graduating from Menomonee Falls High School in June 2005. This four-week program involves classes in English, math, reading and learning skills.

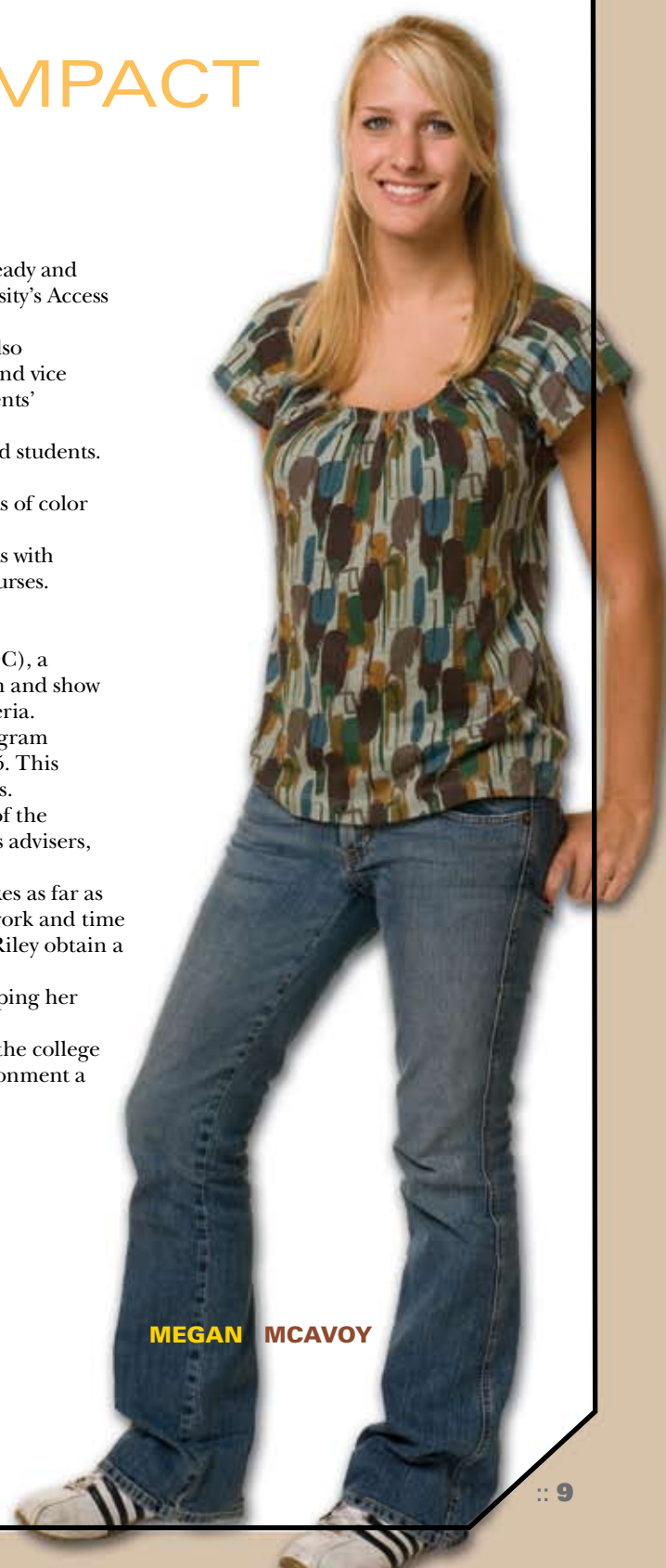
Then, when Riley’s regular fall semester classes started, she took advantage of the tutoring resources on campus and gained academic support from one of AOC’s advisers, Vicki Provost.

“Vicki was very open to what I had to say, and worked with my likes and dislikes as far as picking out classes that had my best interest versus classes that required more work and time – a great listener,” says Riley. Provost also gave financial aid advice and helped Riley obtain a job with AOC as an office assistant.

Riley credits AOC and a peer mentor from UWM’s LINKS program with helping her through freshman year and transition to higher education.

With her self-confidence boosted by an “A” in English 102, Riley leaped into the college experience with gusto. She’s one of those students who found the college environment a much better fit than high school.

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MEGAN MCAVOY



At a summer orientation session before her first semester here, **Megan McAvoy** took advantage of an Access to Success opportunity and requested a faculty mentor. She was paired with Kathryn Dindia, a professor in UWM's Communication Department.

"She was so helpful," says McAvoy. In addition to academic pointers, Dindia encouraged McAvoy to get involved outside the classroom. After learning

that her mentee was interested in volunteering, Dindia steered her to UWM's Center for Volunteerism and Student Leadership. They also talked about campus clubs related to McAvoy's career goals.

McAvoy has her sights on a job in advertising or public relations, so UWM's Ad Club was a natural fit. She credits her experiences with the club for connecting her with professionals in Milwaukee advertising agencies and public relations firms. Ad Club speakers, she says, also helped her know "where I would want to work and where I wouldn't want to work." She plans to join the UWM chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PSRA) this semester.

Other activities are just for fun. McAvoy enjoys playing volleyball with friends at the Klotsche Center. She was captain of an intramural dodgeball team during her first semester here, and has helped organize a campus skydiving club.



Brandy Riley says she wasn't very social in high school. "One of my goals was to become engaged with campus life," she says. "I was determined to find my niche in a campus organization."

Riley's goal is to become a broadcast journalist, and her "home away from home" on campus has become the student chapter of the Minority Media Association. "It's the first organization that I've taken a lead in," she says, "and since it's a new organization, I'm very passionate about it."

Riley also has become an advocate for UWM, often speaking to prospective students at recruitment events. Her enthusiasm is contagious as she encourages high-schoolers to "be ready to tackle your college experience!"

Riley would like to launch a mentoring program for community youth. She also sees herself as a voice for students already on campus. "I think my input is helping new students with issues such as adjusting to college or feeling accepted."

When she talks to high-schoolers, Brandy Riley describes UWM as "a diverse campus with opportunities around every corner."

Megan McAvoy puts it this way: "I love it!"

Access to Success reinforces their messages.

It takes a community

The Access to Success plan recognizes that to be a success, the entire UWM community must embrace its goals and actions. In January, Riley and McAvoy joined seven fellow students on a panel to discuss the Access to Success experience with campus administrators. The discussion covered everything from clubs to dorm life to classes.

“We responded to questions about everything from whether it was hard to study for midterms and finals in the dorms, to how students who didn’t live in the dorms got involved with campus clubs,” says McAvoy.

“It felt good to help with Access to Success.”

Numbers tell the story, too

While students like Brandy Riley and Megan McAvoy are testimony to the impact of the Access to Success initiative, the numbers also tell the story.

In its initial year (2005), Access to Success programs such as first-year courses, tutoring, the summer Bridge program and supplemental instruction made a difference for undergraduate students at UWM, leading to higher retention and graduation rates, says Provost Rita Cheng. (See Chart 2.)

CHART 2

ACCESS TO SUCCESS ONE-YEAR RETENTION RATE INCREASES: PARTICIPANTS VERSUS NON-PARTICIPANTS 2005-06 COHORT

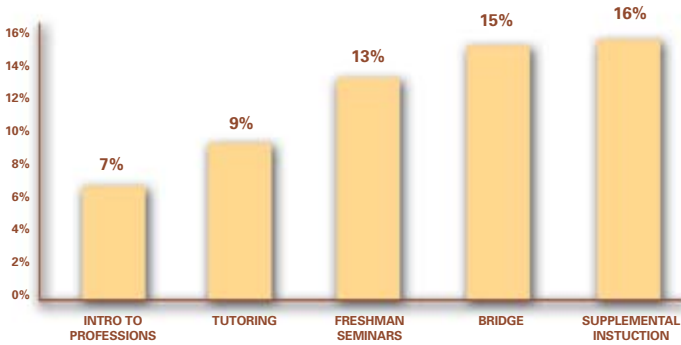
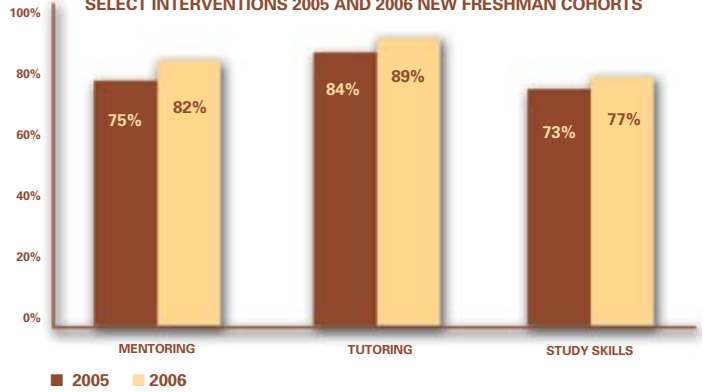


CHART 3

ACCESS TO SUCCESS ONE-YEAR SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE BY SELECT INTERVENTIONS 2005 AND 2006 NEW FRESHMAN COHORTS



The second freshman cohort (2006) had higher satisfactory-performance rates for Access to Success participants than the 2005 cohort – that is, the programs were more successful. (See Chart 3.)

“We’ve seen that Access to Success initiatives are having a positive impact,” Cheng says. “For 2007, we are working to increase participation. While some programs such as Freshman Seminars touch much of the freshman class, others, such as supplemental instruction, need to reach more students who would benefit from the extra attention.”

Participation did increase in 2006. (See Chart 4.)

Looking ahead

With the help of input from students like Riley and McAvoy, there are exciting developments for Access to Success during the upcoming academic year.

A new Student Success Center is being established that will bring Access to Success initiatives such as tutoring, undergraduate research and mentoring together in one administrative home.

Learning Communities are being expanded. Members of these communities attend many of their classes together. Special events are being planned outside the classroom to enhance student learning and allow students to develop relationships with faculty members and classmates.

Access to Success already is having an impact on student achievement. It looks toward even greater success in the future.

CHART 4

ACCESS TO SUCCESS PARTICIPATION INCREASES, 2005-2006	
Freshman Mentoring Network	173%
Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program	150%
Math Course Re-Design	100%
Supplemental Instruction	48%
Summer Bridge Program	24%