



IMPACT REPORT 2020-21

M³ (pronounced M-cubed) is transforming the future of our young people and Milwaukee communities through the power of public education by multiplying the impact of Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Area Technical College and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

INTRODUCTION

In a year that underscored equity gaps in our community and across the nation, M³ partners—Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Area Technical College and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee—remained focused and delivered on our commitment to close these gaps and transform the future of Milwaukee through education. As a partnership among public institutions serving diverse populations, M³ is lifting up individuals, improving the community and building the region's diverse workforce pipeline.

Our success began in the fall of 2020, when 72% of M³ College Connections graduates entered college after graduating high school, exceeding the national college enrollment rate. College Connections students entered college with as many as 21 college credits each, saving graduates more than \$750,000 in college costs over the past three years. An even larger cohort of high school students followed in their footsteps this past school year: We welcomed 120 College Connections students, up from about 30 in our first year.

This is just one example of our collective impact. In this impact report, you will read about shared success in our three focus areas:

- **Connecting learning** across middle school, high school and college
- **Successfully transitioning** students to college
- Driving **college completion**

Please celebrate with us as we recognize the work that has been done and commit to continue to drive achievement for the students of Milwaukee!

CONNECTING LEARNING

To strengthen the connection between what students learn in high school and in higher education, M³ brings together faculty from MPS, MATC and UWM for joint professional development. Nearly 400 educators participated in sessions in February 2021.

- All faculty joined a session about “Teaching for Equity and Inclusion in a Virtual Environment,” learning about inclusive teaching and why it matters for student learning and success, especially amid current inequities and challenges. Educators learned concrete strategies for practicing inclusive teaching, with particular attention to applying these strategies in the virtual classroom.
- English Language Arts instructors learned new ways to creatively engage students with support from Dasha Kelly Hamilton, a mentor to teaching artists who is the city and state poet laureate and whose work has impacted 14,000 students in grades K-12. Participants learned how to better connect creativity to problem-solving.
- Science faculty focused on how to help students better comprehend dense scientific language, opportunities to create lab investigations in a virtual environment, and “anchoring phenomena”—helping students learn science by investigating real-world situations.

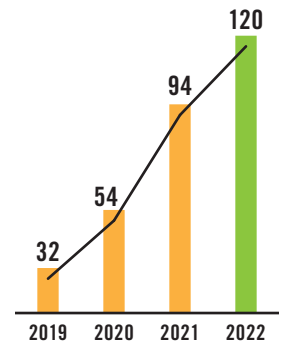
400 EDUCATORS PARTICIPATED IN JOINT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN 2020-21

WE'RE EMPOWERING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO BUILD THE FUTURE THEY WANT AND DESERVE, AND ENSURING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND OUR REGION THRIVE. LEARN MORE AT [UWM.EDU/M-CUBED](https://uwm.edu/m-cubed).

SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONING

The M³ **College Connections** program graduated 94 students in June 2021, up from 54 graduates in 2020 and 32 in 2019. College Connections students are high school seniors who can earn up to 21 transferable college credits by taking classes as a group at both MATC and UWM. The fast-growing program is serving 120 MPS high school seniors this school year.

From the 2021 class of College Connections dual enrollment students, 72% entered college after high school graduation, exceeding the national average (66% for women and 59% for men, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).



- **College Connections** graduates have already saved more than \$750,000 in college costs by earning credits while still in high school.
- Graduates are also demonstrating readiness to attend college by going beyond what Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate coursework can provide. College Connections students take classes on college campuses taught by college instructors.
- M³ continued to offer its **Milwaukee Parent Institute (MPI)** during the COVID-19 pandemic with a virtual option for families. More than 100 parents participated in virtual sessions. Both virtual and in-person sessions will be offered in 2021-22.
- The MPI has served more than 1,000 parents and guardians across 26 MPS high schools.

GRADUATES HAVE SAVED MORE THAN

\$750,000

COLLEGE COMPLETION

Driving College Access and Completion

M³ partners work together each year to encourage MPS high school seniors and their families to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The pandemic brought added urgency to these efforts. A decline in FAFSA completion rates for the MPS Class of 2021 mirrored nationwide trends among school districts serving large percentages of students of color or low-income students. Countermeasures to this decline were needed.

In March 2021, the M³ partnership received boosts through grants from Northwestern Mutual (through the MPS Foundation) and the National College Attainment Network (NCAN). The NCAN grant was earmarked for efforts to encourage FAFSA completion and increase postsecondary enrollment for Class of 2020 and 2021 graduates. This included:

- Mailings and a phone call campaign launched to reach students who had not started the FAFSA as of late-March 2021.
- MPS held 10 days of FAFSA in-person support across the district in mid-April, including 24 in-person events at schools and two district-wide events.
- MPS also hosted district-wide drive-up FAFSA events at four schools in June and July.

MATC and UWM students also will benefit from the Moon Shot for Equity initiative dedicated to ensuring that underrepresented students graduate from college at the same rate as their peers by 2030. UWM and MATC are two of the southeastern Wisconsin institutions involved in this initiative, which was launched in October 2020. The initial work focuses on addressing obstacles or issues that impact current students and future MPS classes for years to come. This includes:

- Retention grants that can help students pay for unforeseen expenses that might prevent them from finishing college
- Reviewing enrollment holds that can prevent students from registering for classes for administrative or financial reasons
- Using technology to coordinate resources for students across campus, including tutoring, counseling and advising

In total, 295 virtual and in-person FAFSA completion events were hosted in partnership with school counselors and community partners during the 2020-21 school year.

295
FAFSA
COMPLETION EVENTS
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