STATE OF WISCONSIN

SENATE CHAIR
Alberta Darling

317 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
Phone: (608) 266-5830

ASSEMBLY CHAIR
John Nygren

309 East, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953
Phone: (608) 266-2343

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Alberta Darling
Representative John Nygren

Date: August 24, 2015

Re: UWS Report to JFC

Attached is a report on the 2014 Undergraduate Drop Rates from the University of Wisconsin System.

This report is being provided for your information only. No action by the Committee is required. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Attachments

AD:JN:jm

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Office of the President

1700 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1559
(608) 262-2321 Phone
(608) 262-3985 Fax

e-mail: rcross@uwsa.edu
website: www.wisconsin.edu/

RECEIVED
AUG 24 2015
B: St. Finance

DATE: August 21, 2015

TO: State Senator Alberta Darling, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Finance
State Representative John Nygren, Assembly Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Ray Cross, President, UW System Ray Cross

RE: 2014 Report on Undergraduate Course Drop Rates

Accompanying this letter is a copy of the Report on 2014 Undergraduate Course Drop Rates, as required by the Legislature. We are pleased to announce that the Systemwide rate has declined significantly since 1989 from 5.3 percent to 2.6 percent. The current report marks the 24th consecutive year in which the UW System has achieved the goal of maintaining a drop rate of five percent or less.

Within the UW System, only the UW Colleges had annual course drop rates that exceeded the five percent threshold. The UW Colleges are pursuing aggressive intervention strategies, many of which occur early in the semester and should increase the likelihood that students will remain in classes. The UW Colleges will continue to work to reduce the course drop rate. However, due to their unique access mission, the UW Colleges may not be able to attain the same low drop rate as most UW four-year institutions.

UW System reports regularly on progress toward strategic goals in our annual accountability initiatives. Student success in completing individual courses is one factor in our larger goal of increasing the number of college-educated Wisconsin residents. All UW institutions have policies in place that discourage students from registering for classes that they don't intend to complete. In that broader context, this annual report on Drop Rates provides little, if any, new information for policymakers or university leaders. With that in mind, I ask that the Committee consider eliminating the requirement for this report so that we may focus our resources on achieving strategic goals.

Please contact me if you have questions or would like to discuss this report.

CC: David J. Ward, Senior Vice President, UW System
UW Board of Regents
UW Chancellors
Sue Buth, Policy Analysis and Research, UW System

UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN
COLLEGES
Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor

July 10, 2015

To: UW System Administration

From: Gregory P. Lampe, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Re: University of Wisconsin Colleges Course Drop Rate

In calendar year 2014, the annual undergraduate course drop rate at the University of Wisconsin Colleges exceeded the UW System five-percent threshold, with a drop rate of 5.4 percent, which is a reduction from calendar year 2013 course drop rate of 5.9 percent, and a significant reduction from the calendar year 2012 course drop rate of 6.2 percent. In fact, the calendar year 2014 drop rate is the lowest at the UW Colleges since 1995. As evidenced by the declining course drop rate, the UW Colleges is deeply committed to reducing the course student drop rate at our institution.

When drawing any conclusions about the UW Colleges course drop rate, it is important to keep in mind the institution's mission and our strong commitment to providing students of all ages, backgrounds, and college preparation with an opportunity to attend college. With this in mind, it is important to note that within the UW Colleges, in fall 2014, 54 percent of the ranked new freshman class came from the bottom two quartiles of their high school class. This percentage is the highest in the UW System. Sixty percent of fall 2014 new freshmen enrollments were first generation college students. This percentage is the highest in the UW System. Our students' successful completion of courses is part of the UW Colleges' access mission and abiding commitment to student success. Therefore, our course drop rate shows that we are both succeeding in providing access and remaining responsible guardians of academic standards. The UW Colleges curriculum is a rigorous one and expectations for student success are high.

In recent years, we have aggressively pursued improving both our retention and course drop rate percentages. These actions include:

- ✓ Careful advising, especially of under-prepared students, including early alert systems and interventions.
- ✓ Continuous improvement of freshman orientation sessions for both traditional and returning adult students, including some web-based components, focusing on adjusting to college-level courses and developing strong study skills and time management skills.
- ✓ Offering 70 sections (15 in spring; 55 in fall 2014) of the First-Year Seminar for new freshman that provide additional academic support and instruction to students to increase their chances for success in college.
- ✓ Increasing high impact practices such as strong instructor-to-student and student-to-student connections through increased opportunities in enrolling students in learning communities, service-learning projects, community-based research and service projects, internships, and faculty-student undergraduate research endeavors.
- ✓ Taking an institution-wide approach to campus-based academic success centers and learning centers. This initiative, an outcome of the 2012 UW Colleges Self-Study for Higher Learning

780 Regent Street, Suite 130, Madison WI 53715-2635 ▪ Phone: 608-263-1794 ▪ Fax: 608-262-7872

Commission continuing accreditation of the Associate of Arts and Science degree, is aimed at providing consistent student support across the institution.

In addition to these measures, we are experimenting with a number of department-based and campus-based projects focused on decreasing the course drop rate and increasing student success:

- ✓ UW Colleges Mathematics Department: The success of various pilot projects over the last several years led to many innovations across the UW Colleges, all with the focus on increased student success in mathematics. These include: 1) concurrent enrollment in pre-algebra and elementary algebra courses with course objectives aligned to allow complementary skill development, 2) use of a flipped classroom format, 3) use of mastery-based mathematics software in conjunction with on-demand, personalized instruction, 4) skill development short courses that precede a regular course, 5) concurrent supplementary instruction courses, 6) use of multiple measure placement techniques to create a better student-course match and 7) new course development whereby developmental course content is combined with degree credit-bearing course content in a single course.
- ✓ UW Colleges English Department: A revised protocol has been developed and implemented for placement into English Composition courses. A variety of measures, including UW System placement test scores, ACT sub-test scores, and a writing sample are included in the new multiple measures protocol. Numerous UW Colleges campuses are engaged in using these multiple measures to place students into the appropriate English Composition course and as staff members on the campuses are trained, the practice is expanding. In addition, most of our campuses have added courses which are tied to and supplement the existing developmental English courses for students who demonstrate greater need for skill development.
- ✓ UW Colleges World Languages Department: The World Languages department has a goal of increasing student completion of state placement testing prior to registering for language courses which will allow faculty and instructional academic staff members, and advisors to match students to the courses best suited to their proficiency levels. Expanding or requiring the completion of placement testing should improve course drop rates in several interrelated ways: 1) creating a more efficient use of classroom time (i.e., higher-level students are not hampered by students with lower proficiency and lower-level students are less intimidated by their classmates); 2) increasing overall student enjoyment of their language acquisition experience; and most importantly 3) improving student success rates.
- ✓ UW Colleges Strategic Enrollment Management Plan: The plan, implemented in fall 2012, represents a comprehensive approach to managing student enrollments across the UW Colleges. A critical part of the plan is its emphasis on student retention and strengthening academic early alert systems. During the 2013-2014 academic year, using funding awarded in the successful UW Colleges Institutional Change Grant project focusing on part-time students, Hobsons' Retain was set-up on all 13 campuses and the UW Colleges Online program. Additionally, student affairs' staff members were trained. Hobsons' Retain, an early alert and student retention program that is designed to support institutions' student success strategies, enables UW Colleges advisors to better manage and track early alerts and interact directly with students who are having difficulty in their classes, including students who are at risk of dropping courses. The program has been fully implemented institution-wide and data will be collected throughout the upcoming 2015-2016 academic year to determine the program's effectiveness and impact on course-level retention rates.
- ✓ Data analytics: In academic year 2012-2013, the UW Colleges and UW System began exploring the use of Desire to Learn (D2L) analytics to determine when students disengage from class

activities. Upon being identified, students are contacted immediately and advised appropriately. Data is currently being collected to determine the impact of the use of data analytics on course retention rates and student success rates.

Please contact me with any questions.

REPORT ON 2014 UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DROP RATES

BACKGROUND

In September 1988, the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents passed Resolution 5045 in response to 1987-88 Wisconsin Act 27. Resolution 5045 directs the UW System Administration to:

1. Monitor course drop rates at all UW System institutions.

2. Require all UW System institutions to reduce or maintain course drop rates during any academic year at no more than five percent of the credit hours registered at the close of the tenth day of classes at the beginning of the fall and spring terms.

3. Direct all UW System institutions whose drop rates exceed five percent, effective in the fall of 1989, to develop and implement plans to reduce the drop rate to five percent. Such plans will be subject to the review and approval of UW System Administration.

4. Report to the Board of Regents annually on the drop rates of each institution.

The Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance passed a motion at its September 1988 Hearing, S13.10, which directed the UW System to report to the Committee annually, beginning in 1990, on:

1. Campuses where the undergraduate drop rate exceeded five percent.

2. The steps being taken to achieve a maximum five percent drop rate at these campuses.

Both the Board of Regents and the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance require UW System Administration to report institutional and System drop rates. The objectives of both the Board of Regents and the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance to reduce course drop rates below five percent have been consistently achieved over successive years since the 1990s.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information only; no action is required.

DISCUSSION

In this report, the course drop rate refers to completed credits as a proportion of enrolled credits. The UW System 2014 annual course drop rate was below the five percent threshold, at 2.6 percent (see Table 1). The UW System has achieved the intent of Resolution 5045 by reducing the number of systemwide dropped credits. In 1989, the systemwide drop rate was 5.3 percent. Over the years, the *Report on Undergraduate Course Drop Rates* has demonstrated a reduction in annual course drop rates to a level that has remained well below the mandated five percent threshold. This trend indicates that course drop rates within the UW System have reached a stable level which is within the guidelines established by both the Board of Regents and the Legislature.

Annual course drop rates among UW institutions were at or below the five percent threshold except for UW Colleges. With an annual drop rate in 2014 of 5.4 percent, the UW Colleges continue to take a variety of actions to reduce the drop rate. These include: (1) Careful advising, especially of under-prepared students; (2) continuous improvement of freshman orientation sessions focusing on adjusting to college-level courses, and developing strong study skills and time management skills; (3) offering 70 sections of first-year seminars providing additional support and instruction; (4) promotion of high impact practices, including strong instructor-to-student and student-to-student connections through learning communities, service-learning projects, community service projects, faculty-student research endeavors; and (5) implementation of an institution-wide approach to academic success centers and learning centers.

These aggressive intervention strategies, many of which occur early in the semester, increase the likelihood that students will remain in classes. The UW Colleges will continue to work to reduce the course drop rate. It is important to note that the current drop rate at UW Colleges is the lowest it has been in recent years. However, given the access mission of the UW Colleges and the students they serve, a drop rate at or below five percent may not be attainable.

RELATED REGENTS POLICIES

Regent Policy 4-7: Add/Drop Policy for Courses (Resolution 5045 adopted 9/9/1988).

TABLE 1
Annual Course Drop Rates for Undergraduates by Institution

	1989	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
UW-Madison	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Milwaukee	6.8%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Eau Claire	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Green Bay	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-La Crosse	5.3%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Oshkosh	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Parkside	8.8%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Platteville	7.3%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-River Falls	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Stevens Point	5.5%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Stout	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Superior	6.0%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Whitewater	7.2%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW Colleges	6.2%	6.4%	6.1%	6.1%	6.2%	5.9%	5.4%

	1989	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
UW System	5.3%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%