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JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Alberta Darling
Representative John Nygren

Date: November 20, 2017

Re: UWS Report to JFC

Attached is the 2016 Undergraduate Course Drop Rates report 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



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NOV 20 2017
JT, Finance

DATE: November 16, 2017

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

FROM: Ray Cross *Ray Cross*

RE: 2016 Report on Undergraduate Course Drop Rates

Accompanying this letter is a copy of the Report on 2016 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 2.5 percent. The current report marks the 26th consecutive year in which the UW System has achieved the goal of maintaining a drop rate of 5 percent or less.

Within the UW System, only the UW Colleges had annual course drop rates that exceeded the 5 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.

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: UW Board of Regents
UW Chancellors
James Henderson, Vice President, Academic & Student Affairs
Jessica Tormey, Chief of Staff and Vice President, University Relations
Sue Buth, Interim Asst. Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research

REPORT ON 2016 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 5 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 5 percent, effective in the fall of 1989, to develop and implement plans to reduce the drop rate to 5 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 5 percent.
2. The steps being taken to achieve a maximum 5 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 5 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 dropped credits as a proportion of enrolled credits. The UW System 2016 annual course drop rate was below the 5 percent threshold, at 2.5 percent (see Table 1). The UW System has achieved the intent of Resolution 5045 by reducing the number of system-wide dropped credits. In 1989, the system-wide 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 5 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 5 percent threshold except for UW Colleges. With an annual drop rate in 2016 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, developing strong study skills, and time management skills; (3) offering 45 sections of first-year seminars providing additional support and instruction; (4) promoting high impact practices, including strong instructor-to-student and student-to-student connections through learning communities, service-learning projects, community service projects, and faculty-student research endeavors; (5) implementation of an institution-wide approach to academic success centers and learning centers; (6) providing pedagogical research and best practices to instructional staff through the UW Colleges Virtual Teaching and Learning Center; and (7) exploring guided pathways to enhance student retention among first generation and underrepresented students. Other departmental-level initiatives are outlined in the accompanying letter provided by UW Colleges Provost Greg Lampe.

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. However, given the access mission of the UW Colleges and the students they serve, a drop rate at or below 5 percent may not be attainable.

TABLE 1
Annual Course Drop Rates for Undergraduates by Institution

	1989	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UW-Madison	At/Below						
UW-Milwaukee	6.8%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Eau Claire	At/Below						
UW-Green Bay	At/Below						
UW-La Crosse	5.3%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Oshkosh	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						
UW-Stevens Point	5.5%	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below	At/Below
UW-Stout	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%	6.1%	6.2%	5.9%	5.4%	5.6%	5.4%

	1989	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UW System	5.3%	3.1%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%

RELATED REGENTS POLICIES

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

COLLEGES

Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor

July 13, 2017

To: UW System Administration

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



Re: University of Wisconsin Colleges Course Drop Rate

In calendar year 2016, the annual undergraduate course drop rate at the University of Wisconsin Colleges exceeded the UW System five-percent threshold, with a drop rate of 5.8 percent in the spring and 5.1 percent in the fall. The annual 2016-course drop rate is 5.4 percent, which represents a decrease from calendar year 2015 course drop rate of 5.6 percent. The 2016 rate is low compared to previous years. As evidenced by the declining course drop rate, the UW Colleges continues to be intensely committed to reducing the course drop rate at our institution and we are continuing to make excellent progress towards dropping below the UW System five-percent threshold.

When drawing any conclusions about the UW Colleges course drop rate, it is essential to keep in mind the institution's mission and our dedication to providing students of all ages, backgrounds, and college preparation with an opportunity to attend college. It is important to note that within the UW Colleges, in fall 2016, approximately 51 percent of the ranked new freshmen class came from the bottom two quartiles of their high school class, which is the highest percentage in the UW System. The average high school rank of the new freshman class was approximately 49 percent, which is the lowest average in the UW System. By contrast, the UW-System-wide average was approximately 67 percent, which is nearly 20 points higher. Fifty-six percent of fall 2016 new freshmen enrollments were first generation college students. This percentage is the highest in the UW System and nearly 20 points higher than the UW System-wide average of approximately 37 percent. The average composite ACT score was approximately 21, which is the lowest average in the UW System. Nearly 20 percent of new freshmen were enrolled part-time—the highest percentage 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.

The UW Colleges has aggressively pursued improving both our retention and course drop rate percentages. Our most recent actions include:

- Careful advising, especially of under-prepared students, including early alert systems and interventions.

- Continuous improvement of freshmen orientation sessions for both traditional and returning adult students, including integrating web-based components, focusing on adjusting to college-level courses and developing strong study skills and time management skills.
- Offering 45 sections (15 in spring 2016; 30 in fall 2016) of the First-Year Seminar for new freshmen that provide additional academic support and instruction to students to increase their chances for success in college. Additionally, the UW Colleges is increasing its curricular support courses in key areas, including Mathematics and English.
- Increasing high impact practices such as strong instructor-to-student and student-to-student connections through increased opportunities in enrolling students in service-learning projects, community-based research and service projects, internships, and faculty-student undergraduate research endeavors. Beginning in fall 2018, high impact practices will be embedded into the new general education degree standards of the UW Colleges' associate degrees.
- Taking an institution-wide approach to campus-based academic success centers and learning centers. Over the past year, the UW Colleges fully implemented the Center for Academic Success and Student Engagement (CASE) on each campus. CASE staff members provide guidance and direction to students seeking library, information technology, proctoring, and tutoring services.
- Actively exploring with the intent of planning and implementing, guided pathways, which should enhance our student retention efforts particularly for first generation and underrepresented students.
- Providing access to the most current research and best practices regarding pedagogy, student success, and student retention to all instructional staff members via the UW Colleges Virtual Teaching and Learning Center. Anticipating increased diversity in student enrollment, the UW Colleges is working on tools to help with inclusive pedagogy, which should have an impact on students' sense of belonging and, ultimately, student retention. These tools will be available to all instructional staff members through the VTLC.
- Since the fall 2015 semester, the UW Colleges has been participating in UW-Madison's Promoting Understanding in Life Sciences Education (PULSE) research program. A research team working with UW Colleges faculty members in the Biological Sciences and Psychology introduced writing interventions to UW Colleges students enrolled in Biology and Psychology courses at six UW Colleges campuses. The study found that writing interventions were successful in encouraging students to make personal connections with the course material. These interventions were successful in promoting course performance in regards to course grades and course-level retention for underrepresented students, including both first-generation college students and minorities. Funding permitting, the research will continue and the project will expand.

In addition to these measures, after several years of experimentation and innovation, the following activities have become institutional practices:

- 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.

Additionally, the Mathematics Department's Algebra Realignment Committee, in response to the new UW System Mathematics Placement Test cut scores, is developing a curricular model that is intended to produce a shorter path to the Associate degree. The plan includes 1) the elimination of the UW Colleges' lowest level pre-algebra course, and 2) the replacement of the existing Elementary Algebra developmental course with a more comprehensive developmental course that would prepare students for their first credit bearing course, regardless of meta-major chosen. The committee is working to make sure that a student's first credit-bearing courses would contain the topics at level of difficulty that would ensure student success, course completion, and course transferability.

- **UW Colleges English Department:** The UW Colleges English Department uses a multiple measures placement process to place students into composition and developmental education support courses, which reduces misplacement and remedial coursework for some students. A variety of measures, including UW System English placement test scores, ACT sub-test scores, high school performance, student self-assessment, and a writing sample are included in the new multiple measures protocol. This year, the placement process expanded to include all 13 campuses and English Department placement readers and Student Affairs placement specialists have received training to help campuses align placement with each student's individual academic needs. In addition, the UW Colleges has expanded the writing studio program, which provides academically at-risk students with individualized support and small group instruction with courses taken concurrently with the studio. The studio program supports student retention and helps students complete both first-year composition and other writing intensive courses.
- **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:** A critical part of the UW Colleges strategic enrollment management planning is our institution's emphasis on student retention and strengthening academic early alert systems. During the 2014-2015 academic year, Hobsons Retain was set-up on all 13 campuses and the UW Colleges Online program. Hobsons Retain 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. Additionally, UW Colleges instructional staff members are using Hobsons Retain to alert academic advisors of students who might be at risk of dropping or failing their courses. The program is widely used by our advising and instructional staff members. In 2016, between 30 to 40 percent of our instructional staff members utilized the early alert system. The UW Colleges

continues to work to increase instructors' use of early alerts and continues to assess the effectiveness of the early alert system on student course-level retention rates.

Please contact me with any questions.