

REPORT ON 2007 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 completed credits as a proportion of enrolled credits. The UW System 2007 annual course drop rate was below the 5 percent threshold, at 3.6 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 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 and UW-Oshkosh. With an annual drop rate in 2007 of 6.9 percent, the UW Colleges continues to take a variety of actions to reduce the drop rate. These include: (1) Careful advising, especially of under-prepared students, and new faculty orientation on reaching under-prepared students who may be more likely to drop classes; (2) improvement of first-year initiatives including freshman orientation sessions focusing on adjusting to college-level courses, developing strong study skills and time management skills, and first-year seminars and curricular/co-curricular initiatives assisting in students' transition to college; and (3) promotion of strong instructor-to-student and student-to-student connections through learning communities, service-learning projects, community service projects, and faculty-student research endeavors.

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 5 percent or lower drop rate may not be attainable.

The course drop rate at UW-Oshkosh was 5.2 percent for calendar year 2007, slightly above the 5 percent threshold. UW-Oshkosh attributes this to two factors. UW-Oshkosh uses a unique academic calendar, with a 14-week semester, followed by a three-week interim. Including the interim course drops with the regular semester data results in a larger number of dropped credits relative to other UW institutions which use a more traditional academic calendar.

Second, beginning in fall 2004, UW-Oshkosh implemented a new drop policy. The drop date was moved from ten days after the first day of classes to 45 days after the first day of classes. Following this new policy, the UW-Oshkosh drop rate increased to 5.2 percent. While the new drop deadline has increased the number of dropped credits, UW-Oshkosh made the change to help students make choices about the classes they take. The chief benefit of this policy change was that the rate of students placed on academic probation and suspension decreased by 22 percent. UW-Oshkosh will continue to monitor the course drop rate, weighing the benefits of an extended drop deadline against what may be temporary slight increases in the drop rate.

RELATED REGENTS POLICIES

Resolution 5045 (October 1988).

TABLE 1**Annual Course Drop Rates for Undergraduates by Institution**

	1989		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
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	5.2%	5.2%
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%		6.7%	6.6%	6.5%	6.2%	6.7%	6.9%

System Total

	1989		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
UW System	5.3%		3.2%	3.1%	3.2%	3.5%	3.6%	3.6%