

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%