

A Deep Dive into DFW Rates

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Objective

To more fully understand the myriad of reasons why students earn D's and F's and withdraw from my 100-level online courses

- COMM 104 Film and Culture
- COMM 110 Introduction to Communication

Background

Many institutions track drop, fail, and withdrawal (DFW) rates and hold instructors accountable for improvement. This approach implies that instructors are responsible for students not passing or withdrawing. Students choose to withdraw. Students earn D's and F's by not completing course requirements. Why don't students do the work? Why do they leave?

Methods

Information collected from

- Registrar
- E-Hive
- Email
- Canvas



128 students registered in 6 Distance Learning classes during the 2019-2020 school year

- 3 sections of COMM 104
- 3 Sections of COMM 110

Results and Considerations

It is easier to see clusters and trends by organizing the data by when students left – not by grade earned.

Term GPA may be an indicator for likelihood of leaving.

- Of the 8 students still at UWS and 2 who graduated, only 3 had a term GPA below 2.0.
- Only 1 of the 20 students not retained had a GPA above 2.0.
 - 17 had a GPA 1.0 or below.

Course	CR	TRM	CR	Cred Enroll	Cred Earned	Withdraw	Left Semester	Act	Level
COMM 110	W	0.00	3	0	Total	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 110	W	0.00	6	0	Total	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 104	W	0.00	9	0	Total	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 110	W	0.00	9	0	Total	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 110	W	0.00	12	0	Total	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 110	W	0.00	12	0	Total	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 110	W	0.00	12	0	Class	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR	
COMM 110	F	0.00	3	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR			
COMM 110	F	0.00	4	0	Left after Fall 2019	FR			
COMM 104	F	0.25	16	4	Left after Fall 2019	FR			
COMM 104	F	1.00	6	3	Left after Fall 2019	FR			
COMM 110	W	0.00	12	0	Class	0	Left after SPR 2020	FR	
COMM 110	F	0.00	12	0	Left after SPR 2020	FR			
COMM 104	F	1.82	15	6	Left after SPR 2020	FR			
COMM 110	F	2.89	12	9	Left after SPR 2020	FR			
COMM 104	F	0.00	9	0	Left after SPR 2020	FR			
COMM 104	F	0.00	9	0	Left after Fall 2020	FR			
COMM 104	F	0.00	10	0	Left after Fall 2020	FR			
COMM 110	F	0.00	6	0	Left after Fall 2020	FR			
COMM 104	D+	1.00	15	9	Left after Fall 2020	Soph			
COMM 104	F	1.27	15	9	W only SPR 2020	FR			
COMM 104	D+	2.50	9	9	Enrolled Spr 2021	Soph			
COMM 110	F	2.00	12	9	Enrolled Spr 2021	FR			
COMM 110	F	2.33	13	10	Enrolled Spr 2021	FR			
COMM 110	F	2.36	11	8	Enrolled Spr 2021	FR			
COMM 104	F	1.73	15	9	Enrolled Spr 2021	Soph			
COMM 110	F	0.90	10	4	Graduated sumr 2021	Senior			
COMM 110	W	2.22	15	12	Class	Enrolled Spr 2021	FR		
COMM 104	W	3.50	15	12	Class	Enrolled Spr 2021	Soph		
COMM 104	W	4.00	12	9	Class	Graduated Fall 2020	Senior		

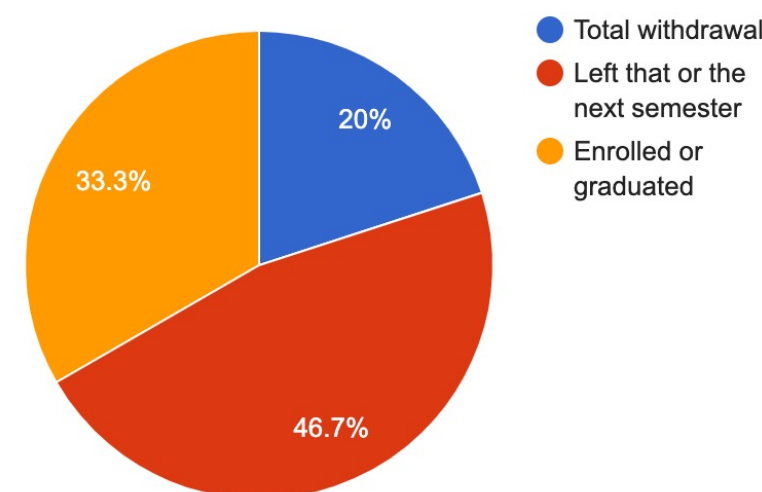
Possible reasons gleaned from student correspondence

- 6 Health - "Mono," "chronic health problems," "pregnant," "TBI," and "severely sick and bed ridden"
- 3 Stress - "Severe debilitating stress," "overwhelmed," and "shut down"
- 3 Life - "Unexpected life circumstances," "death of a friend," and "family issue"
- 5 Employment - "New job," "1st shift," "busy life with two jobs," and "working so much"
- 3 Time management school and family balance
- 7 Online readiness – motivation, organization, procrastination, and time management
- 5 Speech apprehension
- 2 Internet issues
- 2 Living overseas

At least

- 14 Parents
- 11 Working
- 6 First online class
- 8 First semester at UWS
- 20 Experienced taking classes online
- 7 Requested and given opportunity to submit missed work

Two-thirds were not retained



Conclusion and Questions

To help students succeed and to improve retention, we need to consider the specific reasons that keep students from passing classes and staying in school.

- More students than not, have online experience. Online readiness is still an issue, though, and can be addressed.
- If speech apprehension is keeping COMM 110 students from progressing, what accommodation may be made without compromising the course learning goals?
- What is the best approach for students stressed from falling behind, self-shaming, and shutting down?
- How may UWS help students with health, stress, life circumstances, and balancing school with family and/or employment? When students leave for these reasons, how should UWS maintain contact to foster their return?

Gratitude

- Fay Akindes
- Janie Cambell and Anne Carlson
- Maria Cuzzo
- Shanna Nifoussi
- Thora Papineau
- Heather Pelzel
- Nicholle Schuelke
- Alison Staudinger
- Jamie White-Farnham

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