

# REPORT ON 2006 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 System Administration.
4. Report to the Board of Regents whenever the combined rate of dropped credits across the UW System exceeds five percent in any academic year, beginning in the fall of 1990, and make recommendations for further action by the Board of Regents on UW System add/drop policies.

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 in any semester during that year.
2. The steps being taken to achieve a maximum five percent drop rate at these campuses.

The reporting requirements to the UW System Board of Regents and to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance differ. UW System Administration is required to report to the Board of Regents whenever the *systemwide* rate of dropped credits exceeds five percent. The Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance requires UW System Administration to report annually on *campuses* where undergraduate course drop rates exceed five percent in any given semester. The objectives of both the Board of Regents and the Legislative Joint Committee to reduce course drop rates below five percent have been consistently achieved over successive years since the 1990's. In September 1999 and September 2004, the Board of Regents requested that the Joint Committee on Finance eliminate the UW System *Report on Undergraduate Course Drop Rates*. However, the Joint Committee on Finance denied both requests and the report remains a legislative requirement.

## 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. For the purposes of Resolution 5045, the UW System 2006 annual course drop rate was below the five percent threshold. The UW System has achieved the intent of Resolution 5045 by reducing the number of systemwide dropped credits. In the late 1980s, the systemwide drop rate was 5.5 percent. This has fallen to 3.6 percent in the spring of 2006 (the spring term of the 2005-06 academic year) and to 3.5 percent in the fall of 2006 (the fall term of the 2006-07 academic year). On an annual basis, the drop rate was 3.6 percent in calendar year 2006 (see Table 1). 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 Regents and the Legislature. A report containing the following information will be sent to the Joint Committee on Finance.

Annual course drop rates among UW institutions were at or below the five-percent threshold except for UW Colleges and UW-Oshkosh. The UW Colleges exceeded the five-percent threshold, with a drop rate of 6.7 percent in the spring of academic year 2005-06, and a drop rate of 6.6 percent in the fall of academic year 2006-07. The UW Colleges' annual drop rate for 2006 stands at 6.7 percent, compared to 7.1 percent in 2001. The UW Colleges continues to take a variety of actions to continue to reduce the drop rate. These include:

1. improved skills assessment upon admission;
2. continued careful advising, especially of under-prepared students;
3. improved freshman orientation sessions dealing with adjusting to college courses and developing more study skills;
4. continued implementation of the *Engaging Students in the First Year Initiative* which is a comprehensive curricular and co-curricular initiative to assist new students with their transition to college;
5. enrollment of over 35 percent of new freshmen into First-Year Seminars which provide additional support and instruction to students to increase their chances of success in college;
6. additional linked courses and learning community formats to facilitate peer support and a more integrated learning experience; and
7. additional service-learning and community service activities to facilitate peer-to-peer and student-to-instructor interactions.

The UW Colleges will continue to work to reduce the course drop rate. However, given the mission of the UW Colleges and the students they serve, a five percent or lower drop rate may not be attainable.

The course drop rate at UW-Oshkosh was 5.2 percent for calendar year 2006. The spring 2005-06 course drop rate exceeded the five-percent threshold at 5.5 percent, and the fall 2006-07 course drop rate was below the five-percent threshold at 4.9 percent. UW-Oshkosh attributes the increase in the drop rate to two factors. First, the instructional calendar at UW-Oshkosh has two

fourteen-week semesters, each followed by a three-week interim term. The calendar may encourage students to drop courses in the fourteen-week term, knowing that credits may be made up in the interim term. Second, in fall 2004, UW-Oshkosh changed its policy to extend the drop deadline date. After this change, the drop rate rose to slightly over 5 percent. However, a positive result of this policy change is that the number of students placed on academic probation and suspension decreased by 22%.

## RELATED REGENTS POLICIES

Resolution 5045 (October 1988); Resolution 6153 (July 1992).

**TABLE 1**

### Annual Course Drop Rates for Undergraduates by Institution

	1989	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
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	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%	7.1%	6.7%	6.6%	6.5%	6.2%	6.7%

\* The 1989 drop rate for UW Colleges is probably underreported.

### System Total

	1989	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
UW System	5.3%	3.0%	3.2%	3.1%	3.2%	3.5%	3.6%