Why Students Choose to Drop Courses

Fall 2015

As part of the strategic planning process, the Office of Institutional Research began collecting information related to why students drop courses throughout the semester in the fall of 2015. Before students could drop a class they were asked to answer the following question: What is the main reason for dropping your class(es)? The response options provided at the beginning of fall 2015 included the following seven items:

- Financial/cost
- Family issues
- Work/school balance
- Working more or work schedule change
- Do not feel prepared for class(es)
- Failing the class(es)
- Other (please specify)

Based on the results from the first semester of data collection, response options are being modified to be more inclusive of common reasons students drop courses throughout the semester.

The tables below synthesize data representing the reasons for dropping courses for the following four time periods across the semester.

- Why students drop courses BEFORE the first day of classes.
- Why students drop courses between the first day of class and the 10th day of class.
- Why students drop courses between the eleventh day of class and midterm.
- Why students drop courses after midterm and the last day to drop.

Students can drop multiple courses at one time or drop single courses at various points over time or a combination of multiple and/or single courses at various times. This means that a single student may drop three classes at three different time points and for three different reasons. As a result, the data below are presented based on the number of unique students instead of the number of courses dropped. The percentages in the table represent the percent of unique students indicating the response as a reason for dropping a class during the stated time period.

Reasons students drop BEFORE the first day of class:

In the fall 2015, 269 unique students dropped one or more classes BEFORE the beginning of the term. Some students provided multiple reasons for dropping a class and/or dropped a course more than once before the start of the semester. Of the 269 students who dropped a class 36 did not provide any reason for the drop. Specified "other" reasons provided by students were summarized and included in the response options. The 256 reasons for dropping one or more classes for the remaining 233 students are summarized below.

Reasons for Dropping Classes Before the First Day of the Semester	n	%
Financial/Costs	46	19.8%
Work/School Balance	45	19.4%
Changing Majors/Class not needed for major	33	14.2%
Work Schedule Change	32	13.8%
Schedule issues/wrong class/time/location/overlap	31	13.4%
Tested out of class	15	6.5%
Do not feel prepared for class(es)	15	6.5%
Moving/Transferring	12	5.2%
Personal Choice	11	4.7%
Family/Health Issues	9	3.9%
Class Cancelled	7	3.0%
Total Reasons	**256**	

Of the 233 students who dropped one or more courses before the first day of class, approximately 20% indicated that they dropped due to financial reasons. Almost 20% also reported that work/school balance seemed to be an issue for them. Close to 14% of these 233 students dropped courses because they changed their majors and/or they no longer needed the course for their major, and 13% reported scheduling issues. Scheduling issues could include any of the following reasons: overlapping classes, course conflicts, not being able to find the correct class, changing their schedule, signed up for the wrong class, signed up for a class at the wrong location (i.e., Kluthe when they wanted the Mattoon campus), want the class online versus face to face, or vice versa, etc.

Reasons students drop between the first day of class and 10th day:

During the fall of 2015, 376 unique students dropped a class between the first day of classes and the 10th day of the semester. Of the 376 students who dropped a class between day one and day 10 of the semester, 19 did not provide any reason for the drop. The 404 reasons for dropping one or more classes during this time for the remaining 357 students are summarized below.

Reasons for dropping classes between day one and day ten of the semester	n	%
Work/School Balance	103	28.9%
Do not feel prepared for class(es)	74	20.7%
Financial/Costs	53	14.8%
Work Schedule Change	43	12.0%
Schedule issues/wrong class/time/location/overlap	36	10.1%
Family/Health Issues	28	7.8%
Changing Majors/Class not needed for major	27	7.6%

Personal Choice	17	4.8%
Tested out of the class	10	2.8%
Instructor Issues	7	2.0%
Falling behind/Course issues	3	0.8%
Failing the class(es)	2	0.6%
Moving/Transferring	1	0.3%
Class Cancelled	0	0.0%
Total Reasons	**404**	

Almost 29% of the 357 students who provided a reason for dropping a class in the first 10 days of the semester indicated it was due to trying to find work/school balance. Almost 21% dropped because they did not feel prepared for class. Close to 15% dropped due to financial reasons, and 12% dropped because of changes in their work schedules. Ten percent of the students dropped courses because of scheduling issues. Less than 10% of students reporting family/health issues, changing majors/class not needed, personal choice, and testing out of the class as reasons for dropping a class. Two percent reported dropping because of issues with their instructor.

Reasons students drop between 11th day and midterm:

For fall 2015, 249 unique students dropped at least one class between the eleventh day of classes and midterm. Of these 249 students, 18 did not provide any reason for the drop. The 265 reasons for dropping for the remaining 231 students are summarized below.

Reasons for dropping classes between day eleven and midterm	n	%
Work/School Balance	61	26.4%
Do not feel prepared for class(es)	40	17.3%
Work Schedule Change	32	13.9%
Family/Health Issues	29	12.6%
Changing Majors/Class not needed	28	12.1%
Failing the class(es)	26	11.3%
Financial/Costs	16	6.9%
Schedule issues/wrong class/time/location/overlap	13	5.6%
Instructor Issues	9	3.9%
Falling behind/course issues	6	2.6%
Personal Choice	3	1.3%
Class Cancelled	2	0.9%
Moving/Transferring	0	0.0%
Tested out of class	0	0.0%
Total Reasons	**265**	

The most commonly reported reasons for dropping courses between the 11th day of class and midterm are struggling with work/school balance (26.4%), not feeling prepared for class (17.3%), work schedule changes (13.9%), family or health issues (12.6%), changing majors and/or no longer needing the course (12.1%), and failing the class (11.3%). Less than 10% of students reported financial/costs, scheduling issues, instructor issues, falling behind, and personal choice as the reason for dropping class(es).

Reasons students drop between midterm and last day to drop:

For fall 2015, 420 unique students dropped one or more classes between the midterm and the last day to drop. Of these 420, 15 did not provide any reason for the drop. The 469 reasons for dropping for the remaining 405 students are summarized below.

Reasons for dropping classes between midterm and last day to drop	n	%
Failing the class(es)	155	38.3%
Work/School Balance	84	20.7%
Family/Health Issues	66	16.3%
Do not feel prepared for class(es)	57	14.1%
Changing Majors/Class not needed	39	9.6%
Work Schedule Change	32	7.9%
Financial/Costs	13	3.2%
Schedule issues/wrong class/time/location/overlap	8	2.0%
Falling behind/course issues	7	1.7%
Instructor Issues	3	0.7%
Moving/Transferring	2	0.5%
Personal Choice	2	0.5%
Class Cancelled	1	0.2%
Tested out of class	0	0.0%
Total Reasons	**469**	

The most commonly reported reasons for dropping courses between midterm and the last day to drop are failing the class (38.3%), struggling with work/school balance (20.7%), family/health issues (16.3%), and not feeling prepared for class (14.1%). Less than 10% of students indicated that changing majors/class not needed (9.6%). %), work schedule change (7.9%), financial/cost issues (3.2%), scheduling issues (2.0%), and falling behind (1.7%) as the reason for dropping class(es).