

A Report on the Undergraduate Students who didn't return for Fall 2014

prepared by the Office of Academic & Enrollment Services

Summary: This report examines two facets of the fall 2014 *'eligible but not enrolled'* population. These are undergraduate students who did not continue at UIC, although they were academically eligible. First, we report on the students who opted to enroll at other institutions rather than UIC - using the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Student Tracker data. Second, we administered a brief survey of these 'non-returning' students to seek better information on the factors that contribute to a not enroll decision. Sixty-one percent of students who did not enroll were in good academic standing at the end of spring 2014 term. Of the 'non-enrolled' students, 44% were enrolled at another institution during fall 2014 term.

Background

A total of 15,255 degree-seeking undergraduates completed the Spring 2014 term at UIC. Of that total, 2591 students graduated at the end of spring or summer term. A total of 250 were assigned drop status for academic reasons. The total number of returning students enrolled in Fall 2014 was 11,400 thus, 1014 students were eligible to return, but did not enroll. Without additional information, we can only speculate on the reasons these students did not enroll. Some might have transferred, others just stopping out. Anecdotal evidence suggests a myriad of factors contribute to the decision to not continue at UIC – academic reasons, financial factors, and personal influences. This report examines two facets of the fall 2014 *'eligible but not enrolled'* population:

- Tracking subsequent enrollment at other U.S. postsecondary institutions using the National Student Clearinghouse Student Tracker; and
- Understanding the reasons for not returning to UIC through a survey of the students.

This is the third year that Academic & Enrollment Services has prepared this report and administered this survey. Some comparisons to prior year findings are included.

The Target Sample 2014

The target sample is the approximately 1000 undergraduate students who were eligible to enroll for the Fall 2014 term, but did not enroll. This sample includes students in good academic standing and on probation; and students at all class levels (freshmen to seniors). Table 1 provides a summary profile of the students in the population for the analysis.

Class Level		Race/Ethnicity		College (Spr. 2014)	
Freshman	30%	Afr Amer	9%	CBA	11%
Sophomore	22%	Hispanic	25%	Education	<1%
Junior	21%	Asian	19%	Engineering	14%
Senior	27%	Caucasian	40%	CADA	8%
		Other	7%	LAS	61%
Academic Standing				Nursing	1%
Good Standing	61%			AHS	3%
Acad Difficulty	39%			CUPPA	<1%

Methods

This project is designed to gather information about UIC undergraduates who decide not to continue their enrollment. The sample was 1014 UIC undergraduates who completed the Spring 2014 term and were eligible to enroll in the Fall 2014, but did not enroll.

Phase I: In order to determine if the students were enrolled at another institution during the fall 2014 term, a request was submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Student Tracker system. As a member of the Student Tracker service, UIC is able to track student enrollment at over 3600 U.S. institutions. A request for subsequent enrollment of the not -enrolled students (N=1014) was submitted in November 2014.

The file with subsequent enrollment records from NSC was matched to UIC records and analyzed to provide summary information disaggregated by student characteristics.

Phase II: The second phase of the analysis was designed to gather information about students' reasons for not continuing their enrollment at UIC. A brief survey asking students about the factors that influenced their decision not to enroll during the Fall 2014 was administered to the 1014 students who were eligible, but did not enroll.

Results

Phase I Results: From the 1014 records submitted to NSC, a data file yielding 445 useable student enrollment records was returned to UIC. The 445 students were enrolled at 103 different institutions. Additional points about the subsequent enrollments include:

- 48% of the students were attending a four-year institution
- 90% were attending an institution in Illinois
- 65% of the students were in '*Good Standing*' at the end of spring 2014 term at UIC.

Table 2 shows characteristics of the students with a subsequent enrollment record. **Table 3** shows the top subsequent enrollment institutions.

Table 2 : Students with Subsequent Enrollment Record		
Race/Ethnicity	Did Not Return	% with subsequent enrollment record
African American	90	44%
Hispanic	258	44%
Asian	190	56%
Caucasian	403	44%
Other	73	36%
Total	1014	46%
Academic Standing		
Good Standing	623	50%
Academic Difficulty	391	34%
Class Level		
Freshman	300	62%
Sophomore	220	59%
Junior	218	48%
Senior	276	16%

Table 3: Top Enrollment Institutions of UIC Students who did not Enroll Fall 2014

College Name	Count	2yr / 4yr	# in Good Standing
OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE	28	2	12
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS @ URBANA	27	4	25
CCC - WRIGHT COLLEGE	27	2	9
CCC - HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE	25	2	9
MORAIN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE	21	2	13
CHAMBERLAIN COLLEGE OF NURSING	20	4	19
COLLEGE OF DUPAGE	17	2	7
WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE	17	2	7
NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY	15	4	13
COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY	14	2	6
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY	13	4	13
TRITON COLLEGE	12	2	6
CCC - MALCOLM X COLLEGE	10	2	3
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY	9	4	8
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO	9	4	5
SAINT XAVIER UNIVERSITY	8	4	7
JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE	8	2	4
CCC - RICHARD J. DALEY COLLEGE	7	2	0
RESURRECTION UNIVERSITY	6	4	6
ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY	6	4	5
WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE	6	2	5
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO	5	4	5
CCC - HARRY S TRUMAN COLLEGE	5	2	3
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY	5	4	3

Phase II Results: Survey invitations were sent to 1014 non-returning students. A total of 284 invitations were opened (28%) and 126 students responded to the survey – a 12% return rate of the total population, 44% response from those who opened the email. While this is a low response rate, we fully expected that a number of students had disengaged from UIC and would be reluctant to respond. Results reported in this section should be interpreted with the caveat of the low response rate. However, it is useful to examine the feedback both in the survey responses and the open-ended responses to understand the students’ experiences and perspectives.

Table 4 provides a profile of the survey participants. The distribution of the participants across racial/ethnic categories and college of enrollment approximate the distribution of the target population. A total of 90 students -- 71% of the respondents were in academic ‘good standing’ at the end of spring 2014 term. That is, their cumulative course performance at UIC did not signal academic difficulty.

Table 4: Survey Target Population and Respondent Profile				
Race/Ethnicity	Population (N=1014)		Respondents (N=126)	
	count	%	count	%
AfrAm	90	9%	13	10%
Hispanic	258	25%	31	25%
Asian	190	19%	23	18%
Caucasian	403	40%	50	40%
Other	73	7%	9	7%
Total	1014	100%	126	100%
College				
CBA	113	11%	10	8%
Educ	9	1%	2	2%
Engin	138	14%	18	14%
CADA	81	8%	6	5%
LAS	619	61%	87	69%
AHS	14	1%	2	2%
NURS	34	3%	0	
CUPPA	6	<1%	0	
Academic Standing				
Good Standing	623	61%	90	71%
Probation	391	39%	36	29%
Class Level				
Freshman	300	30%	36	29%
Sophomore	220	22%	24	19%
Junior	218	21%	34	27%
Senior	276	27%	31	25%

The survey allowed students to indicate factors that influenced their decision to not enroll for fall 2014. The factors were grouped as: academic, financial, and personal. Within each set of factors, students were able to indicate multiple factors within each group or indicate that none of the factors listed in that group influenced their non-enrollment. **Table 5** reviews the responses to the survey questions. Also shown are the responses to the same question for the Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 non-returning student survey.

A few general observations about the survey responses are noted below:

- The most frequently cited factor was a change in students' financial situation.
- Overall, students cited an academic factor more frequently than financial factors or personal factors in their reason for not enrolling for fall term.
- Students indicated combination of academic influences (more than one factor), more frequently than multiple financial factors or personal factors.
- Issues around academic advising, academic support and feeling overwhelmed (all academic factors) were always cited in conjunction with other academic factors, i.e., never cited as the sole academic factor.
- Students citing inadequate academic advising as an academic factor decreased over the 3 years of the survey administration.

Table 5: Summary of Non-Returning Student Survey Responses					
<i>Q: How likely are you to enroll at UIC in Spring 2014?</i>	Fall 2014				
		Count	%	Fall 2013	Fall 2012
	Very Likely	25	20%	17%	22%
	Somewhat likely	14	11%	11%	8%
	Undecided	6	5%	20%	11%
	Somewhat unlikely	21	17%	15%	19%
Very Unlikely	46	37%	37%	39%	
<i>Q: Following is a list of academic/financial/personal factors that may or may not influence your decisions about enrollment. Please read each statement and check those that contributed to your decision to not enroll at UIC for the Fall 2014 term. (Check all that apply)</i>					
Academic Factors	Count	%	Fall 2013	Fall 2012	
Achieved all that I wanted to achieve at UIC	4	3%	7%	3%	
Changed my major/academic interest	15	12%	16%	11%	
Courses were not challenging	--	--	4%	4%	
Dissatisfied with my grades	21	17%	22%	20%	
Couldn't register for the classes I needed	14	11%	16%	17%	
Felt overwhelmed by the demands of college	12	10%	15%	17%	
Did not receive adequate academic advising	11	9%	23%	34%	
Did not receive adequate academic support	9	7%	15%	16%	
Unhappy with quality of instruction	18	14%	27%	34%	
Unsure about my academic goals	15	12%	12%	14%	
Transferred to another institution	31	25%	31%	42%	
<i>None of these factors contributed to decision</i>	52	41%	33%	21%	
Financial Factors					
Experienced a change in my financial situation	40	32%	34%	26%	
Did not anticipate the full cost to attend UIC	8	6%	12%	12%	
Feel the education at UIC is not worth cost	18	14%	18%	29%	
Did not receive adequate financial aid	31	25%	30%	32%	
My job interferes with my academic success	9	7%	12%	13%	
Wanted to get work experience	10	8%	11%	5%	
<i>None of these factors contributed to decision</i>	49	39%	35%	32%	
Personal Factors					
Health related problem (personal or family)	11	9%	12%	9%	
Didn't seem to fit in at UIC.	10	8%	20%	20%	
Dissatisfied with campus social life	11	9%	21%	21%	
Change in personal circumstances	29	23%	24%	18%	
Missed my friends and family from home.	2	2%	4%	7%	
Could not balance work and school	15	12%	14%	11%	
Could not balance family and school	6	5%	7%	14%	
<i>None of these reasons contributed to decision.</i>	60	48%	40%	42%	

The final item on the survey was an open-ended question which simply asked: “Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about why you are not enrolled at UIC this fall?” A total of 54 students (43% of the students) provided some feedback. The responses fell into the following general categories (in order of frequency of comments):

- Financial concerns including financial aid, cost to attend, and cost/benefit for value
- Personal factors that were key influences –e.g, health, family matters.
- Academic concerns --
 - Admitted to a major program at a different institution (primarily nursing)
 - Dissatisfaction with classroom teaching, academic program and advising
 - Temporary absence associated with internship or co-op experiences
 - Dissatisfied with academic performance/in academic difficulty (probation)
- Job opportunity/entrepreneurial venture
- Course offerings/scheduling concerns

Representative quotes below with student class level and college convey sentiments on some topics of concern:

Couldn't afford full tuition out of my pocket.
Freshman, LAS

I failed my classes because I worked a lot.
Freshman, Engineering

I was not accepted into UIC's nursing program, so I had to transfer to another school.
Junior, LAS

I work fulltime and the math classes that I need are 5 day classes. That's just not feasible with my work schedule. It would be nice if UIC offered 2-3 hour long math classes ..
Senior, LAS

My course schedule allowed me to take classes at Harper, which is closer to home and work and is also significantly cheaper. I plan on registering at UIC for the spring 2015 semester.
Senior, Engineering

Only transferred (to UIC) to build my transcript during a year off from UIUC originally.
Senior, Engineering

.. Critiquing the advising was like poking a beehive with a stick.
Junior, CBA

Observations

This is the third year of the non-returning student survey. Contrasting the response from prior administrations, financial challenges continue to be the most frequently cited reason that students don't return. It is interesting to note the significant decrease in the proportion of students indicating inadequate advising or academic support as reason for not returning.

Closing Thoughts

The reasons students don't persist at UIC are varied. Sometimes students find a better academic or personal fit at another institution, for other students, transfer may have always been a goal. Unfortunately, some students may not find a fit, for some students financing education is too much of a burden. Gathering information in varied ways allows us to begin to piece together a complex picture of the individual student narrative to better inform campus efforts to improve student success.

For additional information on the *Eligible but Not Enrolled Student Survey* or other aspects of this report, contact Patricia Inman, pinman@uic.edu.