

## Institutional Analysis, Assessment & Reporting

**Is there a relationship between reasons given for discontinuing enrollment and returning at a later date?**

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This study is a follow-up to a previous report, *Non-returning and Withdrawing Student Survey Results Through Spring 2011*, which was presented to an ad hoc group convened to study the issue of non-returning students. The study is based on an on-line survey which was sent to students who didn't enroll at all, who dropped all their courses before the census date, or who left between weeks 3 and 6 of the semester for fall 2009, spring 2010, fall 2010, and spring 2011. The 1,002 students who completed the survey were reduced to 901 for this study after duplicates were eliminated. The main question for this study was whether the reasons given for not continuing to enroll were related to the probability of returning at a future date.

### **Primary reason for not continuing and returning at a later date**

As shown by Table 1 below, the main reasons students gave for not continuing their enrollment were work or finances (selected by 35%) or academic, registration or other university issues (also selected by 35%). The third main reason was family or relationship issues (selected by 15%). While overall about 40% of the survey respondents re-enrolled for a subsequent term, the percentages who re-enrolled varied significantly based on the primary reason given for not continuing in the first place. Students with medical, family or relationship issues were most likely to return.

Table 1. Primary reason given for not continuing to enroll and returning during a future term

Primary Reason Given:	N selecting reason	Percent selecting reason	Percent enrolled in a later term
Family or relationship issues	137	15%	48%
Medical issues	81	9%	62%
Work or finances	318	35%	40%
Academic, registration or other university issues	314	35%	35%
Transportation issues	9	1%	22%
Military or religious obligations	42	5%	21%
Total	901	100%	40%

$\chi^2=30.1$ , DF=5,  $p<.0001$



## Follow-up on academic, registration or other university issues

Students who selected academic, registration or other university issues were then invited through the survey to provide additional details on their academic reasons for not returning by selecting all the reasons which applied (see Table 2). Students who selected “inadequate advising” or “quality of instruction” as their reasons for not continuing were much less likely to re-enroll compared to students who selected other academic issues. No other significant differences were found.

Table 2. Academic, registration or other university issues selected and returning during a future term

Academic Reason Given (respondents could select multiple reasons):	N selecting reason	Percent of academic group who selected as reason	Percent who selected this reason who re-enrolled	Percent who did NOT select this reason who re-enrolled
Poor study habits	23	7%	30%	35%
Lack of study time	18	6%	33%	35%
Unable to register for needed classes	101	32%	39%	33%
Inadequate advising*	70	22%	17%	40%
Poor performance on early exams	21	7%	38%	35%
Quality of instruction*	68	22%	21%	39%
Lack of courses at desired locations	74	24%	38%	34%
Lack of courses at desired times	93	30%	35%	35%

\*statistically significant different in re-enrollment behavior

(Note: Limited to 314 students who selected Academic issues as their primary reason)

## Follow-up on work or financial issues:

From the variety of work or financial issues that students could select, three stood out as having either higher or lower return rates compared to the other work/financial issues. Students who indicated that they didn’t continue their enrollment because classes conflicted with their jobs were more likely to return during a later semester. On the other hand, students who lost their job and/or who indicated that they lacked the financial resources for living expenses were less likely to re-enroll compared to other reasons. See Table 3 for details.

Table3. Work or financial issues selected and returning during a future term

Work or Financial Reason Given (respondents could select multiple reasons):	N selecting reason	Percent of work/finance group who selected as reason	Percent who selected this reason who re-enrolled	Percent who did NOT select this reason who re-enrolled
Change in work hours	40	13%	35%	40%
Classes conflicted with job*	55	17%	53%	37%
Accepted a full-time job	55	17%	35%	41%
Job demands	57	18%	42%	39%
Lack of financial resources for school	175	55%	40%	39%
Lack of financial resources for living*	68	21%	24%	44%
Lost job*	22	7%	18%	41%
Unable to find PT work	35	11%	37%	40%
Unexpected bills	57	18%	46%	38%

\*statistically significant different in re-enrollment behavior

(Note: Limited to 318 students who selected work or finance issues as their primary reason)

#### Follow-up on family or relationship issues:

When students were asked for details about the family or relationship issue that caused them to dis-continue their enrollment, only one issue stood out as related to re-enrolling in a later semester. Students who indicated that a family illness or death was the reason behind their withdrawal or failure to continue were significantly more likely to return in a later semester (see Table 4).

Table4. Family or relationship issues selected and returning during a future term

Family or Relationship Reason Given (respondents could select multiple reasons):	N selecting reason	Percent of family/relationship group who selected as reason	Percent who selected this reason who re-enrolled	Percent who did NOT select this reason who re-enrolled
Child care difficulties	16	12%	50%	48%
Family responsibilities	62	45%	55%	43%
Homesickness	5	4%	40%	48%
Family illness or death*	24	18%	75%	42%
Lack of connections with BSU peers	6	4%	50%	48%

\*statistically significant different in re-enrollment behavior

(Note: Limited to 137 students who selected family or relationship issues as their primary reason)

#### Summary:

Reasons that students gave for not continuing to enroll were used to compare rates of enrollment during future terms. Overall, students who indicated that medical issues were the primary reason for their withdrawal from school were more likely to return compared students who selected any other reason. In following up for more specifics related to reasons for lack of continued enrollment, it was discovered that inadequate advising, poor quality of instruction, lost jobs, and lack of finances for living expenses were especially related to lower return rates. Students who indicated that class conflicts with their job and a family illness or death were their reason for discontinuing their enrollment were more likely to return in later semesters compared to other reasons.