

Research Brief #123

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Proportion of “W”s in Fall 2016 English Courses

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At the request of the English Department Multiple Measures Faculty Inquiry Group (FIG) the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness used course grade data for English courses in fall 2016 to examine the proportion of Ws earned.

The purpose of this analysis is to determine the rate at which students withdraw from a given course to inform retention efforts and departmental policies.

The following research questions guided this analysis:

- What proportion of all course grades earned are Ws or FWs?
- What proportion of course grades earned are Ws or FWs disaggregated by course?
- What were the number of units enrolled for students who earn Ws or FWs?
- What was the distribution of Ws or FWs by course length?

Method

To conduct the analyses the usx file for fall 2016 was limited to non-ISAs, non no-credit courses, non-pass/no pass courses and English courses.

Results

A total of 6,647 students (14%) received a W/FW in at least one course that they were enrolled in for fall 2016 among all courses. For students who were enrolled in English courses, a total of 851 (16%) out of 5,278 received W/FW. English courses have a 16% rate whereas non-English courses have a 13.7% rate of W/FWs.

Table 1. Fall 2016 Grade distribution for English courses

All English Courses		A/B/C	D/F	W/FW	Other (Incomplete etc.)	Total
	N	3684	449	851	294	5278
	%	69.8%	8.5%	16.1%	5.6%	100%

Units Enrolled

Total number of units enrolled in the fall 2016 term was examined for students who received an A/B/C in all of their courses, students who received a D/F in at least one course and students who received a W/FW in at least one course. (Table 2). Total number of units enrolled in the term was not substantially different across the grade groups in English courses.

Table 2. Fall 2016 Units Enrolled: Median and Mean by Grade group for English courses. *Those who received ‘Incompletes etc.’ were not included in this comparison.

All Students	Grade Earned	Median	Mean Units enrolled	Std. Dev.	N
	A/B/C/	12	11.03	3.6	2,720

All Students	Grade Earned	Median	Mean Units enrolled	Std. Dev.	N
	D/F	12	10.99	3.4	599
	W/FW	12	11.44	3.4	1,708

Proportion of W/FWs by Course Duration

Course length was examined to determine whether the number of weeks that a course is held has an effect on the proportion of W/FWs (presented in Table 3). The proportion of W/FWs is higher for the longer term courses ($\chi^2=20.228$; $p <.05$) (17% vs. 9%).

Table 3. Length of Course by Proportion of W/FWs

Length of English Course	Total N	W/FW %
7-8 weeks	396	9.3%
16 weeks	4847	16.6%

Proportion of W/FWs by English Course Name

Table 4 provides a list of English courses with a minimum enrollment of 60 or higher and their proportion of W/FWs. ENGL-089 was ranked as the highest (#1) with 48 students out of a total 204 receiving W/FWs (23.5%). In comparison to all 196 courses offered in fall 2016, ENGL-089 was ranked #21. (For proportion of W/FWs for all 196 courses in fall 2016, see RB# 141).

Table 4. English courses proportions of W/FWs in fall 2016

Course	W/FWs (n)	W/FWs (%)	Total Enrolled	Of all 196 courses in fall 16 Rank
ENGL-089	48	23.5%	204	#21
ENGL-096	153	19.2%	795	#41
ENGL-101	305	17.1%	1784	#55
ENGL-091	152	14.6%	1040	#79
ENGL-103	147	14.4%	1019	#81
ENGL-094	1	1.7%	60	#192

Recommendations

Upon review of the proportion of Ws/FWs, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- Consider these results in conjunction with RB#141 that provides top 20 courses with high proportion of Ws across all courses.
- Consider reasons for the high proportion of Ws and FWs in courses identified as having high proportions of Ws.
- Given the higher proportions of W/FWs compared to D/Fs, consider promotion of information on the implication of W/FWs on student transcript and GPAs.

For more detailed information on this research brief, stop by the Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness office located in BONH-224, or contact Preeta Saxena, Senior Research Analyst at 661.362.3072, or Daylene Meuschke, Dean of Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at 661.362.5329.