



Graduate Minnesota

*A Student Perspective on Efforts by
Minnesota State Colleges and
Universities to Increase Re-enrollment
and Degree Completion*

M A R C H 2 0 1 5

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Summary

With the help of a Lumina Foundation Grant, in 2011-2014 the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system conducted a diverse media campaign aimed at students who had stopped out of their college degree program. Its aim was to encourage students to re-enroll by advertising its flexible scheduling options, expanded and accelerated course offerings, and financial aid and tuition benefits. Grant funds also supported increased capacity of MnSCU institutions to be aware of and meet the needs of adult learners.

To inform this work, MnSCU collaborated with Wilder and other partners to collect data on the characteristics and needs of stopped-out students, as well as the number and progress of those who re-enrolled. This report combines survey findings from re-enrolled students, administrative data from MnSCU records, and additional information collected by the marketing partner to better understand the path stopped-out students follow from receipt of the outreach to re-enrollment to graduation, and what factors may help them move from stopped-out student to college graduate.

This report analyzes a variety of factors that may affect a student's progression along the path from stopping out to graduation. Key findings include:

- Online learning options and expanded course schedules are highly valuable to re-enrolled students. Study data suggest these methods assist students to continue their education, especially those who stopped out due to scheduling and personal issues.
- Financial barriers are a key reason for stopping out. Students who face these challenges and manage to re-enroll often have more difficulty completing their degree than those without financial barriers. In addition to financial aid, such students could likely benefit from additional support in other areas as well, such as targeted advising and mentorship.
- Students who were less reliant on campus support were more likely to persist than those who were more reliant on it. This appears to indicate a need for institutions to develop additional support for adult learners. It also raises the potential to significantly raise persistence and graduation rates if such supports can be successfully strengthened.
- Two institutions — Metropolitan State University and North Hennepin Community College — were repeatedly mentioned by student survey respondents as highly supportive of the re-enrollment experience.

Highlighted differences are included in the main reporting, while detailed administrative data analyses and survey responses from re-enrolled students are available in the Appendix.

Introduction

Graduate Minnesota is an initiative of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) to increase the rate of degree completion by adult students. It was funded during 2011 through 2014 as part of a nationwide grant program of Lumina Foundation for Education. MnSCU's activities under this grant have focused on identifying former students who left without completing a degree, as well as encouraging them to re-enroll, and developing or strengthening online and on-campus resources to support the needs of adult learners. Besides outreach and recruitment to the targeted students, significant efforts have been devoted to developing the system's capacity to offer flexible degree program completion options, including awarding credit for prior learning.

The work has been guided by a Steering Committee (including representatives from workforce development partners and the University of Minnesota). Activities were developed and led by three committees of subject matter experts from across the colleges and universities in the system. Wilder Research staff worked with these groups, as well as with the program manager, Online Support Center staff, and systems office leadership, in the development of the overall evaluation design and measures, as well as in the collection of administrative and survey data.

The primary research purpose of this study has been (a) to track the progress of former students who were targeted through a variety of marketing strategies to encourage their re-enrollment, and (b) to identify not only the actual re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates of this group, but also identify what personal and institution-related factors appear to be associated with greater rates at each of these stages of progress.

Although many waves of outreach and marketing have been undertaken as part of the Graduate Minnesota initiative, the first four are most relevant to the population of students studied here. These were two mailings in August and October 2011 to a list of 23,479 former students, and a third mailing in March 2012 to a list of 16,539 former students. Details about the criteria for inclusion in these mailings are in the Appendix. All mailings encouraged students to call an 800 number for information and/or go to the Graduate Minnesota website, which linked them to the Online Support Center with a variety of advising and resource offerings. The mailings were also supported by newspaper and Facebook advertisements, a radio campaign, press releases and related information on the system and campus web sites, and a variety of other supporting activities or incentives. Based on the success of the digital outreach in these campaigns, a second phase of outreach began in the spring of 2013 with a focus on digital outreach. The final sample of 40,559 recipients of outreach messages comprises students from all of the 2011 through 2013 waves of messaging.

Methods

Students who were part of the outreach cohorts were tracked for re-enrollment between Fall 2012 and Spring 2014. By Fall 2012, 68 students (2%) had re-enrolled; by Spring 2014, 2,871 had re-enrolled (7%), and all but six had successfully earned credits at some time during their re-enrolled career.

Three primary research methods were used to analyze outcomes and success factors for the target population of this grant.

Survey of the outreach population

During their 2013-14 online marketing campaign, MnSCU contracted with public relations firm Hatling-Flint to reach a new cohort of more than 40,000 former students. As part of this campaign, in November 2013 Hatling-Flint also invited former students to complete a survey about their reasons for stopping out and views about re-enrollment. Respondents were offered an incentive—the chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift card—to participate in the survey. In total, 1,265 students completed the survey. Wilder Research was provided with the results, which were analyzed in comparison to the results of the survey of students who did re-enroll.

Survey of re-enrolled students

Of the outreach population, all students who re-enrolled during the study period (2,871, or 7%) were emailed an invitation to complete a web-based survey about their reasons for stopping out and their experiences re-enrolling. The survey was conducted during March 2014. Those completing the survey were offered a chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift card. Three hundred and fifteen re-enrolled students (11%) completed the survey (referred to hereafter as the student survey, to distinguish it from the Hatling-Flint survey of non-enrolled former students).

Comparing survey and outreach groups

Although the student survey response rate was low, there were not many substantial differences between the survey respondents and the overall outreach group. Compared to the overall outreach population, student survey respondents were:

- Slightly more likely to be white (81% vs. 75%) and female (67% vs. 52%)
- More frequently eligible for a Pell grant during their initial enrollment (51% vs. 30%)

- Less frequently first generation college students (22% vs. 31%)

These differences are not large enough to justify weighting survey results to increase representativeness. However, given the small number of respondents, findings should be interpreted with caution and considered preliminary, subject to further exploration and replication if possible.

A more detailed comparison of the survey respondents and the overall outreach population can be found in the Appendix.

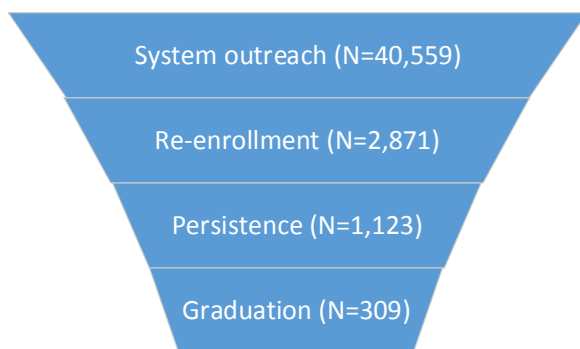
Analysis of administrative data

With the help of staff from the MnSCU office, data were pulled from the Integrated Statewide Records System (ISRS) for all targeted outreach students who re-enrolled during the study period (N=2,871). These data were analyzed as an independent source of information about student characteristics and progress, and were also matched to the responses in the student survey to deepen the interpretation of survey results.

The Appendix includes detailed information about the variables, calculations, and data points presented in the report.

Findings

The study design is based on the hypothesis that students will follow a path to success, shaped like a funnel. After achieving each milestone, the funnel narrows, as only a certain number of students will progress to the next stage of their program. Along the way, several factors will contribute to movement to the next phase. The data allow us to track students along a path to success. Along the way, there are four key milestones for students who have previously stopped out. These milestones, and the numbers reaching each point during this study, are:



In the analysis that follows, we examine key demographic and academic factors associated with progress for each step along the way. The body of the report only includes highlighted differences and similarities; additional information can be found in the “Re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation patterns among groups” section of the Appendix.

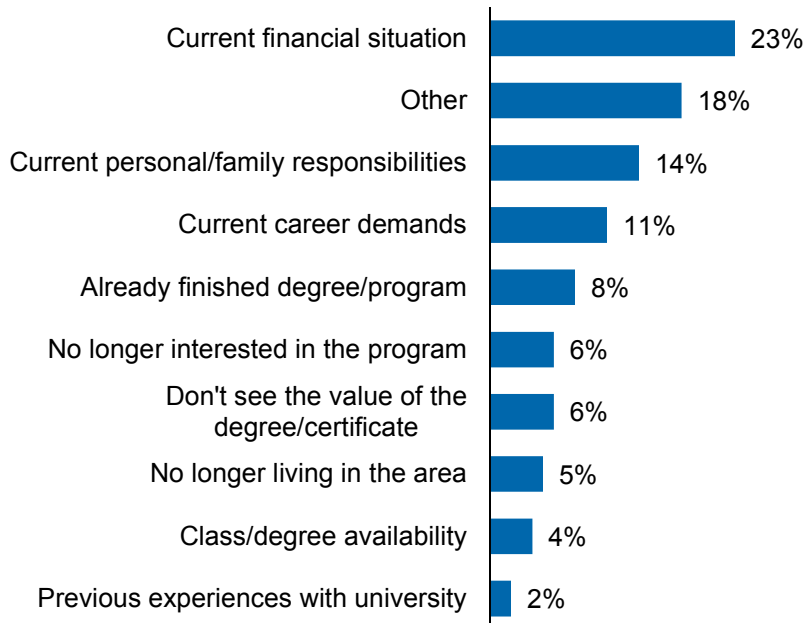
From stopping out to system outreach

In the Hatling-Flint survey of stopped-out students, respondents’ primary reasons for leaving were:

- Financial burden, 22%
- Personal/family responsibilities, 21%
- Other, 18%
- Job demands, 15%

Former students were asked to share the primary factors preventing re-enrollment:

1. Factors preventing re-enrollment (N=1,264)



Source: Hatling-Flint survey of MnSCU students targeted for re-enrollment, 2013-14

Students were asked to share what kind of information they would need if they were to re-enroll. Most requested information about financial aid or scholarships (17%), credit for prior learning (15%), remote access to classes (13%), loan/debt assistance (11%), and other kinds of help (14%).

Those who successfully re-enrolled

Hatling-Flint's survey was directed at students not currently enrolled in a college or university, while the MnSCU/Wilder student survey targeted those who had re-enrolled by January of 2014. Those who re-enrolled were most likely to say that the following problems ranked among their primary reasons for stopping out:

- Personal circumstances (other than financial), 47%
- Family circumstances (other than financial), 34%
- Too hard to combine school with job, 32%
- Could not afford tuition/costs, 27%

When asked to specify other reasons, they most frequently named family responsibilities — such as caretaking for children or sick family members — and job issues, such as needing to work more.

Though we cannot draw definitive conclusions between the two surveys, the difference in responses suggests that it may be easier for those with certain types of hardships — such as personal, family, and scheduling differences — to re-enroll than those with financial concerns.

Key learnings about reasons for stopping out

According to the Hatling-Flint survey, students who had stopped out did so primarily due to financial burden and personal or family responsibilities; these were also among the most frequently cited barriers to re-enrollment.

From system outreach to re-enrollment

MnSCU sent out a series of print and email messages to 40,559 students who had stopped out of their academic programs. By Spring 2014, 2,871 (7%) of all students had re-enrolled. Detailed demographic information for these individuals is available in the Appendix.

Services and supports

In all direct mailings and more general marketing messages, former students were encouraged to utilize on-line, telephone, and/or campus resources for advice and help with re-enrollment. Among these, the Online Support Center (OSC) is a statewide web- and telephone-based resource to support online students in planning, managing, and achieving their educational goals, including help with the kinds of student services and academic support typically available to land-based students such as academic advising, career services, access to tutoring, and financial aid advice.

Most direct marketing communications gave the dedicated 800 number and/or the website in hopes that all leads go through the Student Support Center. There, they completed a Request for Information/Intake form, either electronically or via conversation with an advisor. The advisors tracked all student communication and referred them to the appropriate campus contact via email and/or phone. The advisors also tracked and reported “cold leads” (those who had not received direct, targeted marketing materials) and “remove me from your list” types of communication with the campus and the project manager. One community and technical college handled its own calls in the Fall 2011 outreach but directed them to Online Support Center for Spring; only one community college directed its former students to make their calls directly to the institution during both marketing

campaigns. However, many other students chose to bypass the OSC and contacted campuses directly. Consequently, data collected by the OSC about their contacts are not representative of the full group. There is also no accessible record of the kinds of response or advice received at individual campuses to which the OSC information can be compared.

In the student survey, more than one-third of respondents (36%) said that the Online Support Center and/or campus staff played a role in their returning to school (16% said they were a “major reason,” 20% a “minor reason”).

Financial aid is a primary consideration for many in thinking about re-enrollment. In the student survey, 36 percent of respondents said that the availability of financial aid was a “major reason” they decided to re-enroll, while 19 percent said it was a “minor reason.”

The availability of flexible academic options also helps students decide to re-enroll. In the student survey, 31 percent of participants said that the availability of online learning options was a “major reason” for re-enrolling, and another 22 percent said it was a “minor reason.” The availability of accelerated or condensed courses was an even bigger draw, with 49 percent citing it as a “major reason” and another 22 percent citing it as a “minor reason.”

What students say

Students were asked their primary reasons for re-enrolling (Figure A39). The top three “major reasons” for re-enrollment were a mix of internal factors relating to motivation and external factors related to practical considerations:

- Potential to increase my earnings, 66%
- Satisfaction of finishing what I started, 58%
- Availability of accelerated or condensed courses, 49%

A student’s perception that there are not adequate supports for adult learners is one of many barriers for students considering re-enrollment. One such barrier that many survey respondents reported encountering was the need to contact their campus multiple times to complete everything that was needed to enroll and register in courses. One-third of survey respondents (34%) agreed or strongly agreed that this had been their experience.

Students were asked to give advice to those who might re-enroll (Figure A46). Despite some negative experiences with the process, survey respondents were most likely to reply by encouraging those who have not re-enrolled to “just do it!” or “take advantage of supports and ask for help.”

Demographic characteristics

Certain demographic groups are more likely to re-enroll than others. For example:

- Students who were eligible for a Pell grant upon their first enrollment in a MnSCU program were more likely to re-enroll than those who were not (11% vs. 5%)
- Traditional learners (i.e., those under age 25 at the end of the study period) were more likely to re-enroll than adult learners (14% of traditional learners vs. 8% of adult learners)
- First generation students were slightly less likely to re-enroll than non-first generation students (7% vs. 10%)

Academic characteristics

There were not substantial differences in re-enrollment patterns among students with different academic characteristics. For example:

- Students who stopped out of two-year and four-year schools were equally likely to re-enroll (8% for each)
- Students were equally likely to re-enroll regardless of whether their original course of study was general or occupational (7% of each group)
- Upon re-enrollment, 72 percent of occupational students continued in an occupational field, while only 59 percent of general education students continued in a general education major; that is, students originally engaged in general education courses were more likely to switch to an occupational field than vice versa
- Students were most likely to re-enroll in the same type of institution they originally enrolled in, but one-third of students switched institution types upon re-enrollment
- Students originally enrolled in technical colleges and four-year universities were slightly less likely to re-enroll (6% each) than those originally enrolled in community colleges (8%) and comprehensive community and technical colleges (7%)

Key learnings about re-enrollment

Overall, there were not substantial demographic or academic differences between those who re-enrolled and those who did not, with the exceptions of age (traditional vs. adult learners) and Pell eligibility.

- Traditional learners were less likely to re-enroll than adult learners (14% vs. 8%)
- Students who were originally Pell-eligible were more likely to re-enroll than those who were not (11% vs. 5%)

In total, 53 percent of re-enrolled students were eligible for a Pell grant; most of those originally eligible for a Pell grant were also eligible upon re-enrollment (88%), and 20 percent of those who were not originally eligible became eligible.

It is likely that other factors are actually key to re-enrollment, some of which are revealed in the student survey. In general, the survey group — all of whom re-enrolled — reported financial and personal goals as their primary motivation for re-enrollment. They also said that personal, family, and scheduling issues were the most likely barriers. Re-enrollment may be easiest for students with financial goals who faced primarily personal issues before dropping out. Based on the student records and survey data collected for this study, students with other kinds of problems — for example, financial barriers — are more difficult to successfully re-enroll.

From re-enrollment to persistence

By Spring 2014, 1,123 students (3% of the original outreach sample, or 39% of those who re-enrolled) were either still enrolled or had received an award after re-enrolling during the study period. This section refers to students in either category as those who persisted. The proportions that follow are calculated as a percentage of re-enrolled students, not of all students in the original sample.

Services and supports

Many supports available to promote persistence could not be included in this study due to lack of data availability. However, students who completed the survey described the following factors that were helpful during their re-enrollment. Most importantly:

- 27 percent of re-enrolled survey respondents strongly agreed that they were given helpful information on transferring credits they had earned elsewhere
- 25 percent of re-enrolled survey respondents strongly agreed that the advice they received about programs and courses was helpful
- Re-enrolled survey respondents were less likely to say that the advice of Online Support Center or campus staff were a major reason for re-enrolling (8% of those who persisted, 17% of those who did not) and equally likely to have needed to contact campus multiple times to re-enroll (major reason for 11% of both)

In an open-ended question, students were asked to elaborate on the services and supports that were most helpful. Many survey respondents named specific professors, departments, and academic advisors that inspired and encouraged them during their college experience. More information is available in the “Successful institutions” section.

What students say

Study results indicate that several factors may help students persist. Students who rate their experience with re-enrollment as “excellent” or “good” are likely to continue. Out of all re-enrolled students surveyed, 35 percent rated their experience “excellent,” and 49 percent rated it “good.” Those who were pleased with the curriculum said that their teachers and/or other staff were supportive and that they enjoyed their classes and learning.

Meanwhile, those who only rated the experience “fair” or “poor” tended to say they could use more help, or that teachers or staff were unhelpful. They were also more likely to be disappointed in course or program availability and say the student experience was challenging. Overall, students who persisted throughout the study period:

- Were less likely to have stopped out because they could not afford tuition and costs (major reason for 21% of students who persisted, 34% of those who did not) or due to lack of financial aid (major reason for 14% of students who persisted, 19% of those who did not)
- Were more likely to have re-enrolled to increase their earnings (major reason for 64% of those who persisted, 51% of those who did not)
- Were somewhat more likely to have stopped out due to family circumstances (major reason for 36% of those who persisted, 32% of those who did not) and personal circumstances (major reason for 48% of those who persisted, 45% of those who did not), which included things like ill family members, the birth of children, lack of motivation to continue college, and addiction struggles
- Were less likely to feel that they had little in common with other students (strongly agree for 4% of those who persisted, 11% of those who did not)
- Were less likely to have named campus resources as important factors in re-enrollment, including online courses (major reason for re-enrolling for 29% of those who persisted, 35% of those who did not) and availability of financial aid (major reason for 34% of those who persisted, 39% of those who did not)
- Said that quality course instructors (25%) and class availability (19%) were the most helpful aspects of their re-enrollment experience

- Were equally likely to have stopped out due to rigid scheduling (major reason for 9% of both groups) and due to credit load requirements (major reason for 6% of students who persisted, 5% of those who did not)

Demographic characteristics

- Though they were nearly equally likely to re-enroll, women were more likely to persist than men (41% vs. 35%)
- Traditional students were more likely to re-enroll, and slightly more likely to persist than adult learners (41% vs. 38%)
- Though first generation students were less likely to re-enroll, first generation and non-first generation students were equally likely to persist (38% vs. 39%)
- Though students originally eligible for Pell grants were more likely to re-enroll than non-Pell-eligible students, both groups were equally likely to persist (39% for each)
- Those who were deemed Pell-eligible upon re-enrollment were more likely to persist than those who were not (43% vs. 35%)
- Those who persisted were less likely to consider the availability of financial aid a major reason for re-enrolling (major reason for 26% of those who persisted, 37% of those who did not)

Academic characteristics

- Students who changed institution types were equally likely to persist as those who did not change institution types (40% of those who changed persisted, compared to 39% of those who did not change institution types)
- Students who re-enrolled in comprehensive institutions (42%) and technical colleges (40%) were slightly more likely to persist than those in community colleges (38%) or universities (35%)
- Students whose average course load included between 25 percent and 75 percent online course credits were more likely to remain enrolled than those with a higher or lower proportion of online courses (72% persisted, compared to 31% for 0-25% online and 55% for 75-100% online)
- Students with the least amount of total aid (0-25th percentile) were least likely to persist (30%), while those at the 50-75th percentile were most likely to persist (45%)

- Students with the highest amount of grant and scholarship funding (\$401 or more per credit) were least likely to persist (30%), while those with lower, but still substantial grant funding (\$201-\$400 per credit) were most likely to persist (42%)
- Students majoring in occupational fields were more likely to persist (44%) than students in general education majors (34%); the same pattern is true when limited to two-year programs (46% for occupational fields, compared to 36% for general education fields)
- Students who attended classes part-time after re-enrollment were slightly more likely to persist (42%) than those who returned full time (39%)

Key learnings about persistence

Students less reliant on support—in the form of advising or financial aid—were most likely to persist. Persistence could likely be increased if more support were available.

Financial aid plays a key role in persistence patterns. Those who earn substantial, but not the greatest amounts of aid are more likely to remain enrolled than those who do not. Those who persisted were less likely to say that financial aid played a large role in their decision to return to college.

Those who found institutional resources most valuable were less likely to persist than those who did not rely on them as heavily. This could suggest that students with greater support needs are less likely to remain enrolled. One of these support needs is likely financial aid. Further discussions with faculty and advising staff could likely illuminate additional areas for support, since the demographic indicators included here do not clearly identify particular groups in need of assistance.

Class flexibility and scheduling plays an important role in persistence. Part-time students were more likely to persist than those with full-time credit loads. Likewise, students who took a middling amount of courses online (25 to 75 percent) were more likely to persist than those who took more or less.

Persistence to graduation

In this section, “graduation” indicates that the student received a MnSCU award during the study period. Note that the study period lasted from Fall 2012 to Spring 2014, it is understandable that students who re-enrolled more recently would not be able to obtain their degree during the period. Likewise, students seeking degrees with smaller time commitments (e.g. 1-2 years) would be more likely to complete during the study period than those seeking longer degrees.

Of the original sample population, 309 students (1%) graduated during the study period, which constitutes 11 percent of the students who re-enrolled. The proportions that follow are calculated as a percentage of re-enrolled students, not of all students in the original sample.

Services and supports

Many of the same supports described in the section on persistence are equally relevant to help students move from persistence to graduation, and they show a generally similar pattern in what appears to matter most. For example, working with academic counselors can help students better understand degree requirements. As students progress further into their programs, they may also expand connections with instructors, other students, and campus resources.

Of all re-enrolled survey respondents:

- 22 percent of those who graduated strongly agreed that they were given helpful information on transferring credits they had earned elsewhere, compared to 27 percent of non-graduates
- 23 percent of those who graduated strongly agreed that the advice they received about programs and courses was helpful, compared to 32 percent of non-graduates
- None of those who graduated said the advice of Online Support Center or campus staff were a major reason for re-enrolling, compared to 13 percent of non-graduates

What students say

Of the survey respondents, 13 percent (41 students) had earned a degree during the study period. Overall, graduates were less likely to have named financial barriers as reasons for stopping out, and more likely to have named scheduling problems, credit load requirements, and personal problems as their primary reasons for leaving school. In general, students who graduated:

- Were less likely to have stopped out because they could not afford tuition and costs (major reason for 13% graduates, 29% non-graduates) or due to lack of financial aid (major reason for 11% of graduates, 17% of non-graduates)
- Were less likely to consider the availability of financial aid a major reason for re-enrolling (major reason for 26% of graduates, 37% of non-graduates)

- Were more likely to have stopped out due to scheduling problems (major reason for 14% of graduates, 8% of non-graduates) and credit load requirements (major reason for 11% of graduates, 4% of non-graduates)
- Were more likely to have stopped out due to family circumstances (major reason for 39% of graduates, 34% of non-graduates) and personal circumstances (major reason for 56% of graduates, 45% of non-graduates), which included things like ill family members, the birth of children, lack of motivation to continue college, and addiction struggles
- Were less likely to feel that they had little in common with other students (strongly agree for 3% of graduates, 8% of non-graduates)

Compared to non-graduates, graduates were more likely to emphasize the value of helpful instructors and staff, and to encourage those looking to return to school to utilize them as resources.

Demographic characteristics

Of all re-enrolled students:

- Females were more likely to graduate than males (13% females, 8% males)
- Adult learners were slightly more likely to graduate than traditional learners, though this may be due to the time horizon needed for re-enrollment and graduation (13% of adult learners, 11% of traditional learners)
- White students and students of color were approximately equally likely to graduate (11% white students, 10% students of color)
- Students were equally likely to graduate regardless of original Pell status, re-enrolled Pell status, and first generation status (11% for all)

Academic characteristics

Of all re-enrolled students:

- Students attending technical colleges were less likely to graduate (8%) than those attending community colleges (13%) or comprehensive community technical colleges (15%), while students who re-enrolled in universities were the least likely to graduate (3%), likely due to the time horizon required for graduation

- Students who changed institution types were less likely to graduate (2%) than those who did not (14%), though this may have to do with other factors — for example, students who did not change may have been closer to graduation
- Students receiving the greatest amount of total financial aid (75th-100th percentile) were slightly less likely to graduate (9%) than those in lower aid percentiles (11-12%)
- Students receiving the highest amount of scholarship and grant funding (\$401 or more per credit) were less likely to graduate (4%) than those who were receiving less (10-14%)
- Students in occupational fields were more likely to graduate within the study period (12%) than those studying general fields (8%); however, this is expected due to longer graduation times to complete some general programs
- Among only those students in two-year programs, students in occupational fields were similarly more likely to receive an award after re-enrollment (15%) than those in general fields (10%)
- Students who were part-time were more likely to graduate within the study period (12%) than those who were full time (7%)

Key learnings about graduation

Many students whose reasons for stopping out were related to scheduling, course availability, and credit load requirements are making it to graduation, likely due to the variety of flexible scheduling options at MnSCU institutions. However, there was no clear link between the utilization of online courses and graduation.

Students who received large amounts of financial aid were less likely to graduate than those who did not. Presumably, these students also face other challenges that we were unable to identify in the survey or ISRS data. Faculty and staff who work with these students would likely have more information on the subject.

Institutional factors associated with success

Students were asked to report their satisfaction since re-enrolling in a MnSCU program. Overall, community college students were slightly less likely to rate their experience as “excellent” (27%) compared to students attending other institution types (36-38%). Technical college students were least likely to rate their experience as “fair” or “poor.”

2. Satisfaction after re-enrollment, by institution type

	Excellent	Good	Fair/Poor	N
Technical college	36%	54%	11%	28
Community college	27%	57%	16%	67
Community technical college (comprehensive)	38%	45%	17%	110
University	37%	49%	14%	57
Total	35%	50%	16%	262

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. This measure comes from the re-enrolled student survey.

When institution type is connected with outcomes, students who originally attended technical colleges were less likely to re-enroll at all than those who attended other types of institutions (Figure A28). Students who attended comprehensive institutions were less likely to change institution types (21%) than those originally in other institution types (34-37%).

Overall, students who rated their student experience after re-enrollment as positive were most likely to say that the following experiences helped them the most:

- Quality instructors, 26%
- Academic advisors or the advising process, 18%
- Course availability (online, evenings, weekends), 17%

Academic advising and high-quality advising processes are highly valued among students — they were cited among the most helpful facets of the re-enrollment experience and as primary difficulties when they were absent. Several students remarked that instructors often perform some kinds of counseling activities, such as advising on program plans and decisions. Naturally, once re-enrolled, the quality of the program becomes vital to ensuring that students remain enrolled.

The ability to choose from a wide variety of scheduling options was vital. In open-ended survey responses, students frequently expressed a desire for more choices. However,

course availability or scheduling flexibility were cited as a “helpful” aspect of re-enrollment more than twice as often any other experience. Compared to students in other types of institutions, community college re-enrollees were most likely to name course availability and scheduling options as both a positive (21%) and a negative (10%). This may simply indicate the wide variety of needs for this group of students.

Survey respondents were also asked to identify factors that had helped them the most since re-enrolling. They identified a number of professors and institutions that they felt had performed well. Two of the most frequently mentioned institutions — North Hennepin Community College and Metropolitan State University — are profiled below. In lieu of centralized data from individual institutions or faculty and staff, MnSCU leaders or program directors could reach out to staff at these two institutions to learn more about strategies for working with their adult learners.

North Hennepin Community College

One student described his or her experience at North Hennepin this way: “The people at NHCC (North Hennepin Community College) did everything they could to help me be successful.” All of 13 student respondents who attended NHCC reported a “good” or “excellent” experience since re-enrolling. Some of the factors that helped them the most were:

- Class availability (online/weekends) and flexibility of schedule
- Quality instructors

Metropolitan State University

Of the 26 Metro State respondents surveyed, 91 percent reported a “good” or “excellent” experience since re-enrolling. Students were asked to say what helped them the most since re-enrolling. Students were most likely to say:

- Class availability (online/weekends)
- Quality instructors
- Interesting coursework
- Academic advising or high-quality academic advisors

Other institutions

Survey respondents made a number of comments highlighting other institutions with high-quality services and instructors. They include:

HTC (Hennepin Technical College) has some great teachers that have been very encouraging to me.

I have been to a few other colleges and Inver Hills (Community College) is by far the best.

Experience at SCSU (St. Cloud State University)

Areas for development

For students who rated their satisfaction since re-enrolling as “fair” or “poor,” the most frequent criticisms related to limited course availability and the lack of a variety of supports. They most often cited problems with:

- Advising or course guidance
- Communicating with or relating to instructors
- Accessing financial aid or difficulty managing costs

Five percent of all survey participants cited problems with advising or course guidance. Students at technical colleges were least likely to cite the problem and those at community colleges, comprehensives, and universities were about equally likely to mention them.

A few direct quotes provide detail for these issues. Among this relatively small proportion of students, the following are examples of specific problems or suggestions related to advising:

The college experience is still tailored more towards traditional students.

I would like to see a Veterans Resource Center at HCC.

Lack of academic advisers. Disinterest of staff meant to assist you.

I could use more help with [information] on major programs and transferring.

I could have been better acclimated to how my life was going to need adjusting while in school.

HORRIBLE advising [...]!! A complete lack of caring about the student!!

Dealing with school administration is very difficult, long waits.

Difficulty with financial aid, problematic course design...

Key learnings about institutional supports

From the student perspective, advising and campus support was still an important area for development for many at the time of the student survey (March 2014).

A wide range of availability in class hours — including online, weekend, and evening hours — was valuable for students who re-enrolled. Though some students still wanted more options, many were satisfied by what was provided.

Summary of findings

Key differences emerge for certain groups of students.

Students with financial needs may benefit from additional supports, both prior to re-enrollment and during college. Differences in survey responses to the Hatling-Flint survey of all stopped-out students and our survey of re-enrolled students suggest that many students whose primary concerns are financial may not be re-enrolling. From our analysis of ISRS data, we find:

- Students originally eligible for Pell grants were more likely to re-enroll than non-Pell students
- Pell-eligible students were more likely to persist than non-Pell students (43% vs. 35%)
- Pell-eligible students and non-Pell students were equally likely to graduate (11% for both groups)
- Students receiving the most total aid (75th-100th percentile) and grants and scholarships (\$401 or more per credit) were less likely to persist *and* graduate than their peers

This suggests that students with the greatest financial needs may not have enough support to make it to graduation, even though they are more likely to re-enroll than students with lower levels of need.

Some of these students may also be students who would benefit most from additional supports in the form of advising.

- Students who persisted were less likely to say the advice of Online Support Center or campus staff were a major reason for re-enrolling (7% of those who persisted, 17% of those who did not)

- None of those who graduated said that the advice of Online Support Center or campus staff was a major reason for re-enrolling, compared to 13 percent of non-graduates

It is difficult to identify the students with the greatest support needs based on demographic and academic indicators alone. Likewise, problems may vary significantly by institution, depending on the unique student population enrolled at each school.

Though students do not necessarily decide to re-enroll due to **the availability of online courses and expanded course availability**, they do value them after re-enrolling.

- Students who stopped out due to scheduling reasons are more likely to make it to graduation than those who stopped out for other reasons
- Most students were pleased by the wide range of course availability and named that as a draw for re-enrollment
- Students whose average course load consists of 25 to 75 percent online courses are more likely to persist than those who take a greater or smaller percentage

Recommendations

Here we outline the limitations of the study, as well as some possible next steps for stakeholders.

Limitations

All studies face limitations to their scope and interpretation. Unfortunately, due to a variety of reasons, it was difficult to obtain some pieces of data for this report.

Lack of data about campus resources for adult learners

The college enrollment process is complex, and many factors contribute to re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation. As documented through the grant-funded activities, although a variety of supports for adult learners are present and increasing on many campuses, there is not yet a consistent and centralized system for recording them. Until a system-wide approach is developed, collecting these data from a sample of MnSCU campuses — including at least one of each institution type — as case studies could be effective.

Lack of input from faculty and staff

Students named support staff and high-quality instructors as an important aspect of re-enrollment. A considerable share of grant funds were used to build capacity for faculty and staff to recognize and respond to the needs of adult learners, through credit for prior learning and a variety of other practices. Unfortunately, it proved to be unfeasible to conduct the planned survey of faculty and staff, so we are unable to triangulate students' perceptions against those of campus personnel. When conditions permit, follow-up should be done with faculty and staff to gauge the success and challenges of current work from their perspective.

Next steps

Engaging students with financial concerns

Additional data should be collected about the needs of students facing financial barriers to re-enrollment and persistence. In the survey of all stopped-out students, concern regarding financial aid was the most common barrier to re-enrollment. Though original Pell students were more likely to re-enroll than non-Pell students, they were equally likely to persist and graduate, suggesting that some students may “drop off” the graduation trajectory.

Our study finds that students with lower amounts of total aid and grant funding are more likely to persist than those with the highest amounts. Likewise, those who re-enrolled and participated in the student survey suggested that financial reasons were not among their top issues. Additional data collection activities — perhaps in the form of a focus group or web survey — may help MnSCU better understand the particular needs of these students and how they interact with the system’s resources.

Understanding the availability and value of supports for adult learners

Students who most highly valued the advice of the OSC and campus staff, as well as those who felt they had the least in common with other students, were less likely to persist and graduate than those who were more independent of external factors. This may reflect a level of need that is higher than the capacity of institutions to support, or it may reflect the existence of other underlying challenges for such students that the supports do not address. More information from faculty and staff who work with adult learners, and focus group with students themselves, would help to better understand the nature of currently unaddressed challenges and the strategies most likely to address them. There is, however, a ray of promise in this finding, since increasing the effectiveness of such supports has the potential to make a significant difference in graduation rates.

Learnings and successes to share with the field

Survey findings suggest that some students who stopped out due to scheduling issues were helped by the expanded availability of MnSCU courses, including evening, weekend, and online hours. This should be considered a success, and more information about the structure and strategies used to implement these changes should be shared with leaders in higher education.

Likewise, online learning options may be helping students persist, especially when combined with a substantial share of on-campus courses. Students with an average course load consisting of 25 to 75 percent online courses were more likely to persist than those with more or less. This could be persuasive for leaders and institutions hesitant to embrace online coursework.

The practices of individual institutions that were more highly rated by students for supporting the re-enrolled learning experience — such as Metro State and North Hennepin Community College — should be identified and shared with MnSCU partners. Further discussions with the faculty and staff that work with these populations can identify the strategies that work with these populations.

Appendix

This appendix contains more detailed information about the variables, calculations, and data points contained in the main report.

Key variables and measures

The analysis uses a number of constructed variables to report on outcomes for different populations.

Institution type

MnSCU's colleges and universities are designated as one of four types: community college, technical college, community technical college (comprehensive), or state university. At times, institutions are also grouped into two-year and four-year colleges. Of the 2,871 students who re-enrolled, fewer than 10 did so at the graduate level, and they are included with the university/four-year college group.

Re-enrollment

Student was identified by MnSCU as re-enrolling during the study period or the student was among the group targeted for marketing and earned any credits during the study period.

Persistence

The student was either still enrolled during the last semester in the study period (Spring 2014), or had graduated from any course of study during the study period.

Graduation

The student earned any MnSCU award during the study period. Some MnSCU programs are structured so that students receive multiple degrees. From the data available, we cannot know whether the student met their ultimate degree goal. For example, the student may have intended to get an associate's degree, but only received a diploma during the period. In our analysis, these students are similarly counted as "graduates."

Gender

Students are divided into two groups: male or female. Students without a gender listed are omitted from the gender analysis, but included in other areas of the report.

Age

Students are divided into two primary age groups: traditional students, who were less than 25 years of age, and adult learners, who are age 25 or older. Age was calculated as

of March 19th, 2014, the date the survey was closed and near the end of the study period. They may have re-enrolled at any time from two months to a year and a half before that. Age was not calculated separately for each stage of the funnel.

Race

For much of the analysis, students are divided into two categories: those who are white, and students of color, which includes any ethnicity, as well as multi-racial students. Students whose race is missing or unknown are excluded from these analyses.

First generation college students

First generation college students are identified using the ISRS marker, which follows the Minnesota definition of first generation: students for whom neither parent has ever attended a post-secondary institution. Students whose first generation status is missing or unknown are excluded from these analyses.

Pell status

We utilize two measures of Pell status, which can be used as a proxy for low-income status. Two measures are utilized here: “original” Pell status, which indicates the individual’s Pell status upon their first enrollment in MnSCU, and “re-enrolled” status, which indicates Pell status upon re-enrollment.

Financial aid

We did not have data available to calculate the ideal measure of financial aid assistance — percentage of tuition covered by aid. Instead, we calculate a relative measure to compare the rate of assistance between students, based on the number of dollars received per credit:

- **Total aid** per credit: the sum of all aid available from all sources — including grants, scholarships, and loans from federal, state, local, and institutional sources divided by the total credit load. For total aid, we report those who receive money in the bottom 25th percentile of aid, 25-50th percentile, 50th-75th percentile, and 75th to 100th percentile.
- **Total grants and scholarships** per credit: the sum of aid from grants and scholarships from federal, state, local, and institutional sources, divided by the total credit load. This is the proportion of free aid, which the student will not need to pay back. Due to the extremely skewed distribution of grant and scholarship funding, using percentiles for this variable resulted in very small Ns for some of the resulting categories. For this reason, the variable instead uses artificially constructed categories. The range of values for the highest aid category, \$401 or more per credit, actually ranges from \$401 to \$1353 per credit, a much wider range than the other categories.

Further description of the financial aid variables can be found in Figure A1 and Figure A2.

General and occupational majors

All majors were divided into occupational and general education majors based on a list provided by MnSCU.

Full-time and part-time status

As per MnSCU guidelines, full-time status is defined as an average of 12 or more credits for undergraduates and 9 or more credits for graduate students over the spring and fall semesters they attended during the study period. Only a small number of graduate students (N<10) were included in the study group. Degree type is based on their intended degree field upon re-enrollment. This variable is unavailable for those who did not have credit load or intended degree identified.

Online learning

Online learning is measured as a percentage of total credit load and divided into four categories: students for whom online courses comprise 0-25 percent of their credit load, 25-50 percent, 50-75 percent, and 75-100 percent.

Note: in the tables that follow, “Sample” refers to all re-enrolled students who are documented in the administrative (ISRS) records.

Financial aid descriptive statistics

A1. Total financial aid

	Range	Sample %	Sample N
0-25 th percentile	No award	38%	955
25 th to 50 th percentile	\$0 to \$226 per credit	13%	318
50 th to 75 th percentile	\$226 to \$569 per credit	25%	637
75 th to 100 th percentile	\$569 to \$5820 per credit	25%	636
Total			2,546

A2. Total grants and scholarships

Age categories	Sample %	Sample N
No grant or scholarship funding	75%	1,899
\$1 to \$200 per credit	14%	349
\$201 to \$400 per credit	10%	252
\$401+ per credit	2%	46
Total		2,546

A3. Re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation by total financial aid per credit during study period

	Re-enroll	Persist	Graduate	N
0-25 th percentile	100%	30%	11%	955
25 th to 50 th percentile	100%	36%	12%	318
50 th to 75 th percentile	100%	55%	11%	637
75 th to 100 th percentile	100%	63%	9%	636
Total	100%	64%	11%	2,546

A4. Re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation by total grants and scholarships per credit during study period

	Re-enroll	Persist	Graduate	N
No grant or scholarship funding	100%	36%	10%	1,899
\$1 to \$200 per credit	100%	34%	13%	349
\$201 to \$400 per credit	100%	42%	14%	252
\$401+ per credit	100%	34%	4%	46
Total	100%	36%	11%	2,546

Outreach sample and survey population

A5. Re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Re-enrolled	7%	100%	2,871	315
Persisted (or graduated)	3%	58%	1,123	182
Graduated	1%	13%	309	41
Total			40,559	315

A6. Gender

Gender	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Female	52%	67%	19,015	205
Male	48%	33%	17,639	100
Total			36,217	305

A7. Age, traditional and adult learners

Age categories	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Traditional learners (less than 25 years old as of March 19, 2014)	2%	3%	761	**
Adult learners (25 years old or older)	98%	97%	35,456	297
Total			36,217	**

Note: Data for some groups are suppressed due to small values.

A8. Race, detailed categories

Race	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	**	417	**
Asian	4%	4%	1,252	12
African American	4%	6%	1,328	18
Hispanic or Latino	2%	**	874	**
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0%	21	0
Biracial or Multiracial	2%	3%	854	10
White	86%	84%	30,343	255
Total			35,089	304

Note: Data for some groups are suppressed due to small values.

A9. Race, white and students of color

Race	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Students of color	14%	16%	4,746	49
White	86%	84%	30,343	255
Total			35,089	304

A10. First generation college student status

Student status	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
First generation	31%	22%	9,213	66
Not first generation	69%	78%	20,706	231
Total			29,919	297

A11. Eligible for Pell grant upon original enrollment

Pell grant status	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Eligible	30%	51%	12,218	162
Not eligible	70%	49%	28,341	153
Total			40,559	315

A12. Institution type

Institution type	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Technical college	10%	11%	298	35
Community college	21%	19%	609	61
Community technical college (comprehensive)	44%	47%	1,268	148
University	24%	23%	695	71
Total			2,870	315

A13. Financial aid award from all sources, per credit

Total aid per credit	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
0-25 th percentile	38%	31%	955	81
25 th to 50 th percentile	13%	17%	318	44
50 th to 75 th percentile	25%	28%	637	73
75 th to 100 th percentile	25%	25%	636	66
Total			2,546	264

A14. Grants and scholarships

Grants and scholarships per credit	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
No grant or scholarship funding	75%	70%	1,899	185
\$1 to \$200 per credit	14%	14%	349	38
\$201 to \$400 per credit	10%	**	252	**
\$401+ per credit	2%	**	46	**
Total			2,546	264

Note: Data for some groups are suppressed due to small values.

A15. Part-time vs. full-time status after re-enrollment in MnSCU

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Full-time	27%	27%	635	75
Part-time	73%	73%	1,760	203
Total			2,395	278

A16. Original degree type upon enrollment in MnSCU, two-year vs. four-year

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Two-year degree or less	77%	78%	24,591	220
Four-year degree or more	23%	22%	7,330	61
Total			31,921	281

A17. Degree type upon re-enrollment in MnSCU, two-year vs. four-year

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Two-year degree or less	76%	77%	1,897	222
Four-year degree or more	24%	23%	603	65
Total			2,500	287

A18. Original major upon enrollment in MnSCU, general vs. occupational

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Occupational	49%	52%	19,858	164
General	51%	48%	20,701	151
Total			40,559	315

A19. Major upon re-enrollment in MnSCU, general vs. occupational

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Occupational	43%	57%	1,483	169
General	57%	43%	1,141	128
Total			2,624	297

A20. Re-enrolled weighted average of online credit load

	Sample %	Survey %	Sample N	Survey N
Average of 0-25% online	85%	74%	1,210	10
Average of 25-50% online	3%	**	40	**
Average of 50-75% online	5%	**	69	**
Average of 75-100% online	8%	11%	108	16
Total			1,427	144

Note: The rate of re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation for some groups is suppressed due to small values (N<10).

Re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation patterns among groups

The tables that follow should be read this way: [example from Figure A21]

“Of all females in the outreach group, 8 percent re-enrolled, compared to 7 percent of males. Of all females who re-enrolled, 41 percent persisted or graduated, and 13 percent graduated.”

A21. Gender

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	Re-enrolled	Persisted or graduated	Graduated
Female	8%	41%	13%
Male	7%	35%	8%
Total	8%	38%	11%

A22. Age categories

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	Re-enrolled	Persisted or graduated	Graduated
Traditional learners (less than 25 years old as of March 19, 2014)	14%	41%	**
Adult learners (25 years old or older)	8%	38%	11%
Total	8%	39%	**

Note: The rate of graduation for traditional learners is suppressed due to small values (N<10).

A23. Race, detailed categories

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6%	**	**
Asian	11%	43%	10%
African American	12%	37%	10%
Hispanic or Latino	9%	45%	**
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	**	**	**
Biracial or Multiracial	11%	39%	12%
White	7%	38%	11%
Total	**	39%	11%

Note: The rate of re-enrollment, persistence, and graduation for some groups is suppressed due to small values (N<10). Students identified as non-resident aliens and those with unknown or missing race codes are excluded from this analysis.

A24. Race, white and students of color

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Students of color	11%	40%	10%
White	7%	38%	11%
Total	8%	39%	11%

Note: Students identified as non-resident aliens and those with unknown or missing race codes are excluded from this analysis.

A25. First generation college student status

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
First generation	7%	39%	11%
Not first generation	10%	38%	11%
Total	9%	39%	11%

A26. Eligible for Pell grant upon original enrollment

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Eligible	11%	39%	11%
Not eligible	5%	39%	11%
Total	7%	39%	11%

A27. Eligible for Pell grant upon re-enrollment

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Eligible	NA	43%	11%
Not eligible	NA	35%	11%
Total	NA	39%	11%

A28. Re-enrollment patterns by original institution type

Original institution type	Re-enrolled institution type					Did not re-enroll	N
	Tech	Comm	Compre	Univ			
Technical college	3%	1%	1%	0%	94%	3,727	
Community college	1%	5%	1%	1%	92%	8,218	
Community technical college (comprehensive)	0%	0%	6%	1%	93%	16,904	
University	0%	1%	1%	4%	93%	11,697	
Total % of original enrollments	1%	2%	3%	2%	93%	40,559	

A29. Institution type upon re-enrollment

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Technical college	NA	40%	8%
Community college	NA	38%	12%
Community technical college (comprehensive)	NA	42%	15%
University	NA	35%	3%
Total	NA	39%	11%

A30. Financial aid award from all sources, per credit

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
0-25 th percentile	NA	30%	11%
25 th to 50 th percentile	NA	36%	12%
50 th to 75 th percentile	NA	45%	11%
75 th to 100 th percentile	NA	37%	9%
Total	NA	36%	11%

A31. Financial aid award from all sources, per credit

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
No grant or scholarship funding	NA	36%	10%
\$1 to \$200 per credit	NA	34%	13%
\$201 to \$400 per credit	NA	42%	14%
\$401+ per credit	NA	30%	4%
Total	NA	36%	11%

A32. Student status upon re-enrollment in MnSCU, part-time vs. full-time

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Full-time	NA	39%	7%
Part-time	NA	42%	12%
Total	NA	41%	10%

A33. Original degree type upon enrollment in MnSCU, two-year vs. four-year

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Two-year or less	8%	40%	13%
Four-year or more	8%	31%	4%
Total	8%	38%	11%

A34. Degree type upon re-enrollment in MnSCU, two-year vs. four-year

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Two-year or less	NA	42%	13%
Four-year or more	NA	34%	2%
Total	NA	40%	10%

A35. Original major upon enrollment in MnSCU, general vs. occupational

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Occupational	7%	40%	14%
General	7%	38%	7%
Total	7%	39%	11%

A36. Re-enrolled major upon enrollment in MnSCU, general vs. occupational

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Occupational	NA	44%	12%
General	NA	33%	8%
Total	NA	40%	10%

Note: There were 247 re-enrolled students with missing or not applicable re-enrolled majors, which explains the difference in total percentages between Figures A32 and A33.

A37. Re-enrolled weighted average of online credit load

	% of Outreach Group	% of Re-enrolled Group	
	<i>Re-enrolled</i>	<i>Persisted or graduated</i>	<i>Graduated</i>
Average of 0-25% online	NA	31%	10%
Average of 25-50% online	NA	70%	**
Average of 50-75% online	NA	74%	**
Average of 75-100% online	NA	55%	**
Total	NA	36%	10%

Note: The graduation rate for students with an average of 25 to 100 percent online coursework is suppressed due to small values (N<10).

Student survey results, overall

A38. Before you re-enrolled, which of the following were reasons you stopped out of your college program?

	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
Personal circumstances (other than financial)	47%	20%	34%	294
Family circumstances (other than financial)	34%	15%	51%	296
Too hard to combine school with job	32%	19%	49%	298
Could not afford tuition / costs	27%	26%	47%	294
Left for another opportunity	20%	15%	65%	293
Financial aid not available	16%	15%	69%	291
My program of interest was not available	10%	12%	78%	290
Schedule was too rigid	9%	18%	73%	289
Didn't understand program/degree requirements	6%	13%	82%	293
Required to take more credits than I could handle	5%	14%	81%	289

A39. Which of the following were reasons you decided to re-enroll?

	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
Potential to increase my earnings	66%	18%	16%	284
Satisfaction of finishing what I started	58%	26%	15%	287
Availability of accelerated or condensed courses	49%	22%	28%	278
Availability to choose the number of credits that will work for me	36%	29%	35%	282
Availability of flexible schedule options	36%	21%	43%	284
Availability of a program that interests me	31%	22%	46%	282
Availability of financial aid	29%	25%	46%	281
Availability of helpful advice from Online Support Center and/or campus staff	16%	20%	64%	278
Availability of an online learning option	12%	23%	65%	284

A40. Please indicate your impression of the experiences you have had at college since you re-enrolled.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
My instructors provide support for my academic success	43%	48%	5%	3%	283
I feel my instructors care about how I am doing	32%	56%	9%	3%	276
I was given helpful information on transferring credits I had earned elsewhere	27%	45%	19%	10%	188
The advice I received about programs and courses was helpful	25%	56%	10%	9%	252
In general, I was able to balance school, family and/or job obligations	23%	60%	12%	5%	279
I was given helpful information on obtaining credit for learning I have done outside of college	13%	30%	33%	24%	183
I had to contact the campus multiple times to do everything that was needed to enroll and register	11%	22%	43%	23%	259
I have little in common with the other students	7%	22%	56%	15%	247
My coursework is more difficult than I expected	6%	26%	59%	8%	280

A41. Before you re-enrolled, which of the following were reasons you stopped out of your college program? (Other: specify)

	%	N
Family responsibilities/other issues (started a family/had children, caretaking)	14%	24
Job issues/changes (needed to get a job/work more, got a different job that didn't need education)	11%	18
Program issues (limited classes/availability, degree took too long to complete)	8%	14
Physical/mental health issues (incl. burnout, chemical dependency)	8%	13
Academic issues (probation, failed classes)	6%	10
Didn't know what to do with life after college	6%	10
Other personal issues (harassment, cultural issues, personal conflicts)	6%	10
Left area (moved out of state/area, enlisted in military)	5%	9
Financial reasons (limited financial aid availability, ran out of money for school)	5%	9
Changed intended major/career	5%	8
Time management issues (couldn't balance school/work life, had no time)	4%	7
Didn't like program/lost interest	4%	6
Guidance/advising issues (lack of advising, unsure of what was needed to complete degree)	2%	4
Other	12%	20
Nothing/No/None	3%	5

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A42. Which of the following were reasons you decided to re-enroll? (Other: specify)

	%	N
Wanted to finish degree	19%	23
Better job prospects/career advancement opportunities	17%	20
Needed a new job/career path	13%	16
Self-improvement	7%	9
Financial reasons (received funding from employer, received grant)	7%	9
Improved class availability (online courses, new programs)	6%	7
Ongoing interest in subject	5%	6
Other academic interests (counselor help, customer service, high quality instruction)	5%	6
Family encouragement (“want to set a good example for my children”)	5%	6
Increased stability (sobriety, more time, stable living situation)	3%	4
Increased job security	2%	3
Other	1%	1
Nothing/No/None	9%	11

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A43. Of your college experiences, which did you find most helpful? (Other: specify)

	%	N
Quality instructors	25%	48
Class availability (online/weekends)	17%	33
Academic advising/advisors themselves	17%	33
Other support staff	9%	17
Flexibility of class schedule	4%	8
Being around students (shared experiences)	4%	8
Interesting coursework	4%	7
Website	3%	5
Personnel	2%	4
Feeling successful	2%	4
Orientation/student programs	2%	4
Communication with teachers/instructors	2%	3
Program infrastructure	2%	3
School location/size (includes class size)	2%	3
Campus facilities (computer lab, etc)	2%	3
Easy to transfer credits	1%	2
Financial aid	1%	2
Learning experiences	1%	1
Expanded worldview	1%	1
Nothing/No/None	3%	6

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A44. Of your college experiences, which did you find most difficult? (Other: specify)

	%	N
Time management (balance between school and life)	23%	48
Communicating with/relating to instructors	8%	17
Class availability/scheduling	8%	16
Financial aid	5%	10
Advising	5%	10
Completing homework	4%	8
Specific courses	3%	7
Program issues	3%	6
Course guidance	3%	6
Cost/paying for it	2%	5
Enrollment process	2%	5
Transferring programs/credits	2%	5
School fees (not tuition) too high	2%	4
Program changes	2%	4
Campus hours/location	2%	4
Transportation/commuting to and from campus	2%	4
Technological knowledge	2%	4
Personal/medical issues	2%	4
Cultural differences (not fitting in – includes age)	1%	3
Getting credit for coursework	1%	3
Attendance/going to class	1%	3
Other students	1%	2
Too many departments/processes too complicated	1%	2
Personal issues	1%	2
Motivation	1%	2
Academics	<1%	1
Costs/financial difficulties	<1%	1
Campus issues	<1%	1
Processes/procedural issues	<1%	1
Other	3%	7
Nothing/No/None	7%	14

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A45. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with your student experience since you re-enrolled? Why do you give it that rating?

	%	N
Teachers/staff were supportive	23%	43
Good experience	17%	31
Enjoying classes/learning	11%	20
Could use more help/staff were unhelpful	9%	16
Difficult experience	7%	13
Experience more good than bad/better than I expected	7%	12
Disappointed in program/course availability	5%	10
Processes complex or hectic	3%	6
Experience tailored to traditional students/not enough in common with other students	3%	6
Always room for improvement	3%	5
Proud to be a student	3%	5
Learned a lot	2%	4
Specific course	2%	4
Academic/neutral (or need context) comments	2%	3
Class offerings	2%	3
Not enough support	2%	3
No jobs available now	2%	3
Difficulty with financial aid/price	2%	3
Helped with career	1%	2
Course selection	1%	2
Negative comments	1%	1
Commute time too long	1%	1

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A46. What advice would you give a friend who is considering re-enrolling, and why?

	%	N
Do it	49%	78
Take advantage of supports/ask for help	19%	30
Be prepared/think ahead	6%	10
Don't take on too much/pace yourself	6%	9
Do your research/figure some things out on your own	6%	9
Make sure you want it	4%	6
Be patient/don't give up	4%	6
It's hard but worth it	3%	5
Go into it with a goal	3%	5
Stay focused	3%	4
Have fun	2%	3
Never too late to go back	2%	3
Leave time to figure out your financial aid	2%	3
Give yourself time to adjust	1%	2
Be realistic	1%	2
Keep learning	1%	1
Call about concerns you have	1%	1

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

Student survey results, by re-enrolled institution type

A47. Before you re-enrolled, which of the following were reasons you stopped out of your college program?

	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
A) Left for another opportunity				
2-year	20%	13%	67%	226
4-year	21%	21%	58%	67
B) Too hard to combine school with job				
2-year	30%	21%	49%	232
4-year	36%	14%	50%	66
C) Could not afford tuition/costs				
2-year	26%	25%	48%	228
4-year	29%	29%	42%	66
D) Financial aid not available				
2-year	16%	15%	68%	225
4-year	15%	15%	70%	66
E) Required to take more credits than I could handle				
2-year	5%	14%	80%	223
4-year	5%	14%	82%	66
F) Didn't understand program/degree requirements				
2-year	6%	13%	81%	227
4-year	5%	11%	85%	66
G) Schedule was too rigid				
2-year	9%	19%	72%	223
4-year	11%	15%	74%	66

A47. Before you re-enrolled, which of the following were reasons you stopped out of your college program? (continued)

H) My program of interest was not available	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	8%	13%	79%	223
4-year	15%	10%	75%	67
I) Family circumstances (other than financial)				
	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	32%	17%	52%	230
4-year	42%	11%	47%	66
J) Personal circumstances (other than financial)				
	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	44%	21%	35%	228
4-year	55%	15%	30%	66

A48. Which of the following were reasons you decided to re-enroll?

A) Potential to increase my earnings	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	61%	24%	16%	216
4-year	52%	35%	13%	68
B) Satisfaction of finishing what I started				
	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	63%	18%	19%	219
4-year	75%	18%	7%	68
C) Availability of an online learning option				
	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	28%	22%	49%	215
4-year	41%	22%	38%	69
D) Availability of financial aid				
	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	36%	23%	41%	214
4-year	36%	16%	48%	67

A48. Which of the following were reasons you decided to re-enroll? (continued)

E) Availability to choose the number of credits that will work for me	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	29%	26%	45%	214
4-year	29%	22%	49%	68

F) Availability of helpful advice from online support center and/or campus staff	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	10%	25%	65%	212
4-year	15%	17%	68%	66

G) Availability of flexible schedule options	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	36%	30%	35%	216
4-year	38%	28%	34%	68

H) Availability of a program that interests me	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	50%	22%	28%	215
4-year	46%	24%	30%	67

I) Availability of accelerated or condensed courses	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason	N
2-year	17%	22%	62%	211
4-year	13%	15%	72%	67

A49. Please indicate your impression of the experiences you have had at college since you re-enrolled.

A) My instructors provide support for my academic success.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	43%	48%	6%	3%	219
4-year	44%	48%	3%	5%	64

B) My coursework is more difficult than I expected.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	6%	28%	59%	7%	214
4-year	6%	21%	59%	14%	66

C) I feel my instructors care about how I am doing.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	34%	52%	11%	3%	214
4-year	26%	68%	3%	3%	62

D) The advice I received about programs and courses was helpful.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	22%	59%	10%	9%	190
4-year	32%	48%	11%	8%	62

E) In general, I was able to balance school, family and/or job.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	22%	60%	14%	5%	214
4-year	28%	60%	6%	6%	65

F) I was given helpful information on transferring credits I had earned elsewhere.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	26%	47%	17%	10%	144
4-year	27%	36%	27%	9%	44

G) I was given helpful information on obtaining credit for learning I have done outside of college.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	13%	30%	33%	24%	135
4-year	13%	31%	33%	23%	48

A49. Please indicate your impression of the experiences you have had at college since you re-enrolled. (continued)

H) I have little in common with the other students.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	5%	22%	56%	18%	189
4-year	14%	22%	55%	9%	58

I) I had to contact the campus multiple times to do everything that was needed to enroll and register.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
2-year	10%	22%	44%	25%	199
4-year	17%	23%	42%	18%	60

A50. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with your student experience since you re-enrolled?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N
2-year	34%	49%	10%	6%	221
4-year	37%	50%	12%	2%	68

A51. Before you re-enrolled, which of the following were reasons you stopped out of your college program? (Other: specify)

	2-year	4-year	N
Family responsibilities/other issues (started a family/had children, caretaking)	12%	22%	24
Job issues/changes (needed to get a job/work more, got a different job that didn't need education)	13%	3%	18
Program issues (limited classes/availability, degree took too long to complete)	9%	5%	14
Physical/mental health issues (incl. burnout, chemical dependency)	8%	5%	13
Academic issues (probation, failed classes)	5%	11%	10
Didn't know what to do with life after college	5%	11%	10
Other personal issues (harassment, cultural issues, personal conflicts)	5%	8%	10
Left area (moved out of state/area, enlisted in military)	6%	3%	9
Financial reasons (limited financial aid availability, ran out of money for school)	5%	5%	9
Changed intended major/career	4%	8%	8
Time management issues (couldn't balance school/work life, had no time)	5%	<1%	7
Didn't like program/lost interest	5%	<1%	6
Guidance/advising issues (lack of advising, unsure of what was needed to complete degree)	2%	3%	4
Other	12%	11%	20
Nothing/No/None	2%	5%	5

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A52. Which of the following were reasons you decided to re-enroll? (Other: specify)

	2-year	4-year	N
Wanted to finish degree	18%	21%	23
Better job prospects/career advancement opportunities	13%	28%	20
Needed a new job/career path	16%	3%	16
Self-improvement	7%	10%	9
Financial reasons (received funding from employer, received grant)	8%	7%	9
Improved class availability (online courses, new programs)	8%	<1%	7
Ongoing interest in subject	5%	3%	6
Other academic interests (counselor help, good customer service, high quality instruction)	4%	7%	6
Family encouragement (“want to set a good example for my children”)	4%	7%	6
Increased stability (sobriety, more time, stable living situation)	3%	3%	4
Increased job security	3%	0%	3
Other	1%	0%	1
Nothing/No/None	9%	10%	11

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A53. Of your college experiences, which did you find most helpful? (Other: specify)

	2-year	4-year	N
Quality instructors	26%	22%	48
Class availability (online/weekends)	16%	20%	33
Academic advising/advisors themselves	16%	20%	33
Other support staff	11%	2%	17
Flexibility of class schedule	4%	4%	8
Being around students (shared experiences)	5%	2%	8
Interesting coursework	3%	7%	7
Website	2%	4%	5
Personnel	3%	<1%	4
Feeling successful	1%	4%	4
Orientation/student programs	1%	4%	4
Communication with teachers/instructors	1%	2%	3
Program infrastructure	1%	2%	3
School location/size (includes class size)	1%	2%	3
Campus facilities (computer lab, etc.)	2%	<1%	3
Easy to transfer credits	1%	2%	2
Financial aid	1%	2%	2

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A54. Of your college experiences, which did you find most difficult? (Other: specify)

	2-year	4-year	N
Time management (balance between school and life)	24%	19%	48
Communicating with/relating to instructors	8%	9%	17
Class availability/scheduling	7%	9%	16
Financial aid	4%	6%	10
Advising	4%	6%	10
Completing homework	4%	2%	8
Specific courses	2%	6%	7
Program issues	4%	0%	6
Course guidance	3%	2%	6
Cost/paying for it	2%	2%	5
Enrollment process	3%	0%	5
Transferring programs/credits	2%	4%	5
School fees (not tuition) too high	1%	4%	4
Program changes	2%	0%	4
Campus hours/location	1%	6%	4
Transportation/commuting to and from campus	2%	0%	4
Technological knowledge	2%	2%	4
Personal/medical issues	1%	4%	4
Cultural differences (not fitting in – includes age)	1%	2%	3
Getting credit for coursework	1%	2%	3
Attendance/going to class	1%	4%	3
Other students	1%	0%	2
Too many departments/processes too complicated	1%	0%	2
Personal issues	1%	0%	2
Motivation	1%	0%	2
Academics	1%	0%	1
Costs/financial difficulties	1%	0%	1
Campus issues	1%	0%	1

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A55. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with your student experience since you re-enrolled? Why do you give it that rating?

	2-year	4-year	N
Teachers/staff were supportive	25%	19%	43
Good experience	15%	23%	31
Enjoying classes/learning	11%	12%	20
Could use more help/staff were unhelpful	10%	5%	16
Difficult experience	8%	5%	13
Experience more good than bad/better than I expected	5%	12%	12
Disappointed in program/course availability	6%	5%	10
Processes complex or hectic	4%	2%	6
Experience tailored to traditional students/not enough in common with other students	4%	2%	6
Always room for improvement	3%	2%	5
Proud to be a student	3%	2%	5
Learned a lot	3%	0%	4
Specific course	3%	0%	4
Academic/neutral (or need context) comments	1%	5%	3
Class offerings	1%	5%	3
Not enough support	1%	5%	3
No jobs available now	2%	0%	3
Difficulty with financial aid/price	1%	2%	3
Helped with career	1%	0%	2
Course selection	1%	2%	2
Negative comments	1%	0%	1
Commute time too long	1%	0%	1

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.

A56. What advice would you give a friend who is considering re-enrolling, and why?

	2-year	4-year	N
Do it	48%	53%	78
Take advantage of supports/ask for help	18%	24%	30
Be prepared/think ahead	6%	9%	10
Don't take on too much/pace yourself	6%	3%	9
Do your research/figure some things out on your own	6%	3%	9
Make sure you want it	4%	3%	6
Be patient/don't give up	5%	0%	6
It's hard but worth it	3%	3%	5
Go into it with a goal	3%	3%	5
Stay focused	2%	3%	4
Have fun	0%	9%	3
Never too late to go back	2%	0%	3
Leave time to figure out your financial aid	2%	0%	3
Give yourself time to adjust	2%	0%	2
Be realistic	2%	0%	2
Keep learning	1%	0%	1
Call about concerns you have	1%	0%	1

Open-ended responses, coded into themes by Wilder Research.