Student Success

Definitions

Retention rate

Retention rate is calculated using an entering cohort of full-time degree seeking Year 1 students registered for the first time in the fall term. Retention is measured as a percentage of this same cohort that re-enrols in the subsequent fall term.

Graduation rate

Graduation rate is measured using a single entering cohort of new full-time Year 1 undergraduate students and determining whether they graduated within seven years. The results are grouped in program categories (e.g. Humanities, Social Sciences) as per the government.

Employment rate

Each year the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, in cooperation with Ontario's universities, administers the Ontario University Graduate Survey. The survey is administered to all graduates (Bachelors and First Professional Degree Programs) two years after graduation and asks for information on employment outcomes at six months and two years after graduation. For this document, the two-year rate will be used. The results are grouped in program categories as per the government.

Introduction

A university degree is a significant investment for students as university degree holders are more resilient to economic downturns[1] and earn more over their lifetime[2]. Reaping the rewards of this investment is paramount to students, and student success is a priority for universities. Taking a holistic approach is the key component in the development of student success. Student success can be measured in many ways including the attainment of educational objectives, acquisition of knowledge skills and competencies, engagement, and satisfaction with educational experiences[3]. Information sheets on the student experience summarize findings from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS) to capture these metrics. This document primarily focuses on student success metrics used by the Ministry. Both graduation rate and employment after graduation are metrics the Ministry uses

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[1] Statistics Canada. COVID-19 and job displacement: Thinking about the longer term. Report No.: 45280001. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00030-eng.htm

[2] Statistics Canada. Census in Brief: Does education pay? A comparison of education in Canada and its provinces and territories. Report No.: 98-200-X2016024. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016024/98-200-x2016024-eng.cfm

[3] Holmes, J. (2021). An Examination of Student Success within Canadian Higher Education: Fifty Years of Findings and Recommendations for the Future. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 51*(3), 13–32. https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.vi0.189127

to hold universities accountable. It is important to keep in mind that there is a relationship between selectivity and completion rates with highly selective schools tending to have higher rates of completion[4, 5]. Efforts to improve the rates in which students re-enrol and graduate are ongoing.

I. Retention
UWindsor's first year retention rates have shown improvement for the freshman cohort, increasing from 82.9% in 2011 to 85.9% in 2019.

Historically, UWindsor's Year 1 to Year 2 retention rates have been 3.0% below our selected Ontario peers. For entering cohorts from Fall 2010 through 2019, UWindsor's 1st to 2nd year average retention rate was 86.2%. This compares to an average of 89.2% for the seven Ontario institutions in the university's Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE) peer group. Since 2010, the University of Windsor has remained within 4% of the average of our selected Ontario peers. Figure 1 shows the University of Windsor's retention rate by cohort year.
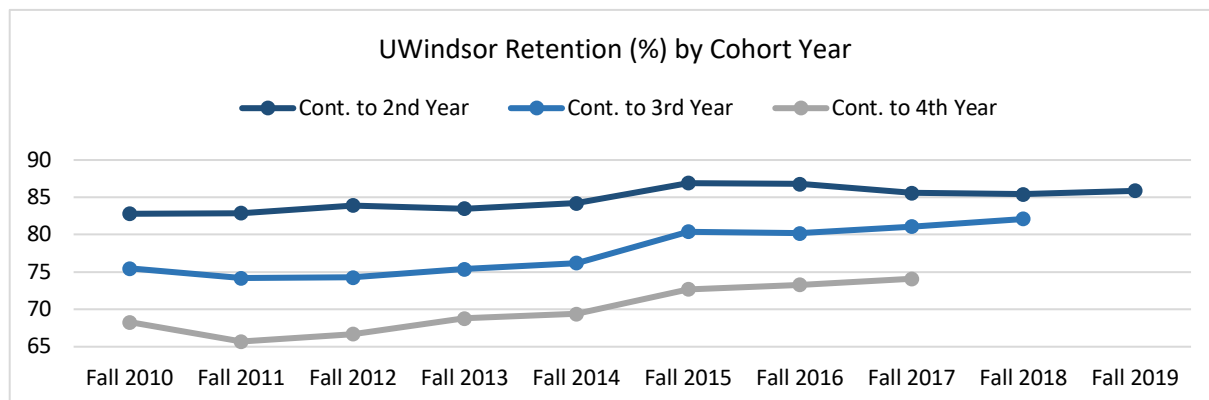

Figure 1

II. Graduation Rate
The graduation rate at UWindsor ranges from 98% in Nursing to 49% in the "Other Arts and Sciences." Overall, the University's graduation rate is 73.2% versus the system rate of 76.9%. The University's Office of Institutional Analysis website has published the detailed rates by program.

III. Employment Rate
Table 1. highlights the employment rate by program. For 2018 UWindsor graduates, employment rates two-years after graduation ranged from 75% to 100%.

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[4] Walters, D., Brown, R., Parekh, G., Reynolds, D., Einmann, T. (2021). Postsecondary borrowing patterns and graduation among transfer students in Ontario: The role of high school academic performance. https://oncat.ca/sites/default/files/media-files/1_-_postsecondary_borrowing_patterns_and_graduation_among_transfer_students_in_ontario-compressed.pdf
[5] Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (1998). Postsecondary indicators '98: Graduate outputs and attainment. https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/publications_archives_indicators98_chapt2.pdf

Table 1. Employment Rate by Program

Program	Employment Rate
Biological Sciences	94.1%
Business	91.5%
Computer Science	85.7%
Education	91.1%
Engineering	91.9%
Fine and Applied Arts	93.1%
Humanities	94.7%
Kinesiology	94.2%
Law	88.2%
Mathematics	75.0%
Nursing	98.8%
Physical Sciences	100.0%
Social Sciences	94.9%
UWindsor	93.4%
System	92.7%

*Overall System rates and average salary includes programs not offered at UWindsor (i.e. Dentistry, Medicine, Pharmacy)

88.9% of the UWindsor students employed full-time said their work was closely or somewhat related to the skills developed in their program of study.

From the University's *Strategic Mandate Agreement, 2020-25 (abridged):*
The University of Windsor serves a more diverse and less affluent student population than many other Ontario institutions. A significantly higher proportion of our students work compared to their Ontario peers[6], and approximately 80% identify financial barriers or work obligations as obstacles to their academic progress.

The University continues to prioritize student progression to graduation through evidence-based and persistence-oriented programs:
- All first-entry undergraduates have access to formal peer mentorship programs at the faculty level;
- Mental health strategy implementation: approximately $600,000 ($240,000 in base) invested in preventative mental health initiatives and centrally located and faculty-embedded mental health services;
- Highly successful first-year transition and support programs, including Bounce Back, which provides empirically proven training in study skills, resilience, and self-management for students at risk of noncompletion; a fully re-designed Welcome Week; and supplementary instruction programs to boost success in large-enrolment quantitative courses;

[6] National Survey of Student Engagement. (2020). NSSE 2020 Summary Report. https://www.uwindsor.ca/institutional-analysis/sites/uwindsor.ca.institutional-analysis/files/nsse_2020_report.pdf

- Faculty-based initiatives including online and proactive advising, integrated mental health and academic advising, faculty-specific student success programming, and co-curricular student-led cohort programs;
- Expanded student engagement opportunities in leadership, co-curricular programming, and high-impact practices, all associated with improved student perseverance; and
- Expansion of online courses and programs, enabling more flexible degree completion.

Best Practices and Resources

- A study by York University found strong relationships between program and achievement patterns, as well as students' sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., gender, racial identity, disability, region of birth, parents' education, profession, etc.) to post-secondary access and graduation[7]. UWindsor lacks data to analyze student success metrics by sociodemographic characteristics, but it would be of great benefit to establish the mechanisms to enable this work.

- Literature on student success indicates a continuous effort is required to understand and support student success in a variety of formats, both within academia and in the workforce[3]. While post-university performance and persistence are the most commonly cited metrics of student success, tools are needed to measure students' knowledge, skills, and competencies to ascertain that the system is functioning as intended. A better understanding of psychological factors (e.g., cognitive, mental health) and psycho-social factors (e.g., parental education, identity) that affect student success is needed to address social inequality through access to higher education.

- To explore sociodemographic data regarding secondary students and post-secondary education, there are two suggested documents. The first is *Factors Influencing Black Students in Windsor and Their Pursuit of Post-Secondary Education[8]*. The second is *Adapting to Diversity: Organizational*

- *Influences on Student Achievement[9]*, which explores how institutions can achieve quality and diversity through adaptations supporting achievement of diverse learners.

- Race-based and socioeconomic data could be found by consulting post-secondary institutions like Dalhousie University. Dalhousie is a national leader in well-established support services and programs that not only encourage Black students to attend university but programs to assess their progress and see them through to graduation.

- Felten, P. et al (2016). *The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass

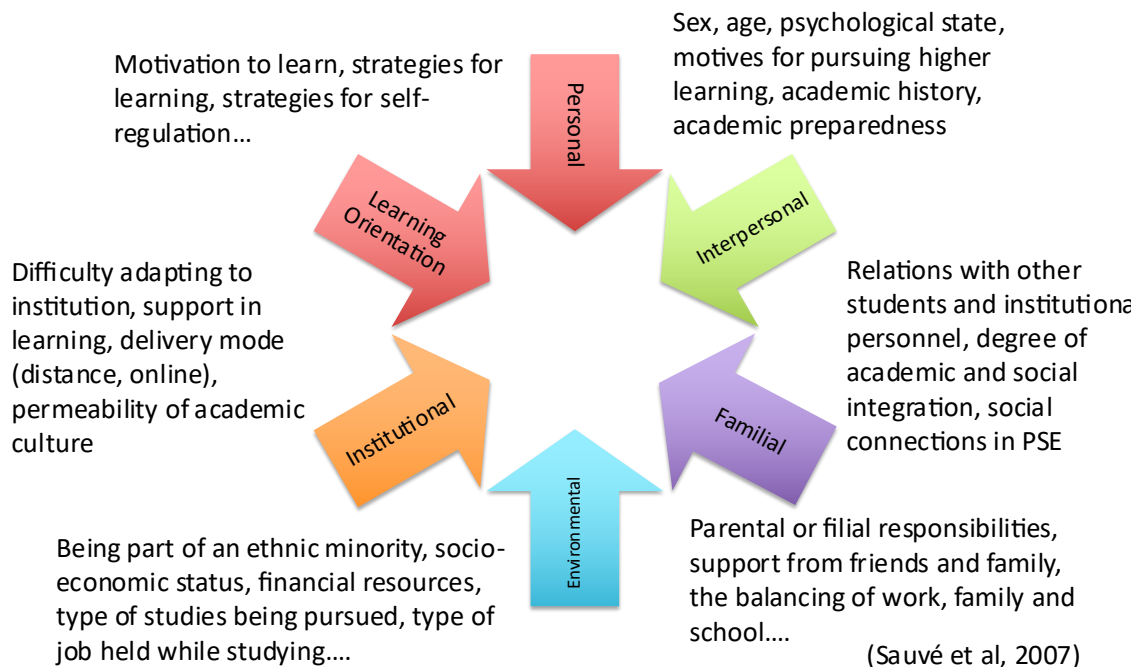[7] Parekh, G. & Brown, R. & James, C. (2021). Who Comes to York? Access, Participation and Graduation Trends. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356392516_Who_Comes_to_York_Access_Participation_and_Graduation_Trends

[8] Tolson-Murtty, M. (2008). Factors influencing Black students in Windsor and their pursuit of post-secondary education. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 8088. https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/8088

[9] Richardson, R. C. Jr., & Skinner, E. F. (1990). Adapting to diversity: Organizational influences on student achievement. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *61*(5), 485-511. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1981973

- Gardner Institute publications: https://www.jngi.org/publications

- Educational Advisory Board(n.d.) Roadmap: Improve Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Retrieved from: https://eab.com/research/academic-affairs/roadmaps/improve-student-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/

- Educational Advisory Board (n.d.) 5 surprising leading indicators of student success disparities. Retrieved from: https://eab.com/insights/expert-insight/academic-affairs/5-surprising-leading-indicators-of-student-success-disparities/

Perseverance Stressors

Motivation to learn, strategies for learning, strategies for self-regulation…

Sex, age, psychological state, motives for pursuing higher learning, academic history, academic preparedness

Personal

Learning Orientation

Interpersonal

Difficulty adapting to institution, support in learning, delivery mode (distance, online), permeability of academic culture

Institutional

Environmental

Familial

Relations with other students and institutional personnel, degree of academic and social integration, social connections in PSE

Being part of an ethnic minority, socio-economic status, financial resources, type of studies being pursued, type of job held while studying….

Parental or filial responsibilities, support from friends and family, the balancing of work, family and school….

(Sauvé et al, 2007)

Thinking Questions

1. How can the University balance the need to maintain and improve retention and graduation rates with the goal to provide greater access to a university education for high school students?
2. How can the University encourage research on student success factors so that more can be known about the factors contributing to or barriers to student success?
3. How does the University of Windsor define student success?
4. How is student success defined by students and alumni?
5. How can the University address discrepancies in the conceptualization of student success?