



Wisconsin

postsecondary education focus

STUDENT OUTCOMES: 2012 - 2014

An analysis of outcomes data collected to track students' progress over a three-year period in EAB-approved schools, colleges and universities.

INTRODUCTION

The Educational Approval Board (EAB) is responsible for approving and overseeing private, for-profit and certain non-profit postsecondary institutions that enroll Wisconsin residents. The EAB's primary role centers on consumer protection of Wisconsin students in certificate, diploma and degree programs offered by approved institutions. For two decades, the EAB has collected student outcomes information to help students make informed educational choices and hold institutions accountable for student results.

History of Outcomes Collection

The EAB began collecting student outcomes data from approved institutions during the mid-1990s, but an ever-changing postsecondary education environment has made it necessary to adapt data collection methods over time. Over the last 10 years, the EAB has improved and simplified the outcomes reporting process to more purposefully gather, use and disseminate student results data.

In September 2010, the agency conducted an in-depth review of student outcomes data and school performance which revealed the need for better accountability measures. As a result, the EAB moved away from aggregate collection methods, which had provided only a snapshot in time of an institution's total student enrollment by program. Without student start dates or length of time enrolled, the snapshot did not provide insight into trends over time or a clear picture of student retention and attrition. To address these limitations and collect data in a more focused and meaningful manner, the EAB implemented changes to begin tracking students in twelve-month cohorts based on start dates occurring within defined periods of time.

Outcomes data help
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In 2013, schools began reporting student outcomes data based on an annual cohort model. The change from aggregate- to cohort-level reporting allows the EAB, institutions and prospective students to more effectively interpret outcomes. Analysis of the outcomes data provides the opportunity to identify student results on both an institutional and programmatic level.

The percentage of students who withdraw by the end of their first year has increased with every new cohort.

EAB’s Statutory Responsibility

The EAB’s governing statutes are clear that its fundamental responsibility is to protect Wisconsin consumers. Under s.38.50 (2), *Wis. Stats.*, “[t]he board shall protect the general public by inspecting and approving private...schools doing business in Wisconsin whether located within or out-side this state.”

In accordance with the statutes, the board is expected “to protect students and encourage schools to maintain [programs] consistent in quality, content, and length with generally accepted educational standards.” To meet these ends, the EAB assesses the adequacy of programs offered by schools to Wisconsin residents and also establishes minimum standards for those courses. Additionally, the EAB approves programs, schools, changes in ownership or school control and teaching locations to ensure they meet the requirements and standards as established by the board. Through these processes, the statutes place a focus on encouraging and supporting schools to be educationally sound.

Summary of Findings

The student outcomes analysis finds that although total enrollments have declined over the last three years, the percentage of students who withdraw in their first year has increased with each new cohort reported. Comparing the available Year 2 data from the 2012 and 2013 Cohorts, the drop rate continued to increase both year-to-year and cumulatively. Table 1 illustrates this trend and provides a comparison of Year 1 rates. Applying to this data a statistical model, detailed in a later section, to control for institutional and educational characteristics provides evidence to further support the claim that drop rates will continue to rise overall in subsequent years and for future cohorts.

Table 1. Year-to-Year Drop Rate

	2012	2013	2014
Year 1	27%	30%	31%
Year 2	30%	32%	-
Year 3	24%	-	-

METHODOLOGY

Shown in Table 2 below, the EAB’s standard cohort year runs from July 1 through June 30, although schools have the flexibility to choose an alternative 12-month period such as a calendar year or business fiscal year. A cohort consists of all students who enroll within the specified 12-month period and remain tied to the cohort start year until they exit an institution. For example, students who enrolled in a program at any point between 7/01/13 – 6/30/14 were assigned to the 2013 Cohort.

Table 2. Cohort Reporting Periods

Cohort	Standard	Calendar	Alternative
2012	7/1/12 - 6/30/13	1/1/12 - 12/31/13	12-Month Period Starting in First 9 Months of 2012
2013	7/1/13 - 6/30/14	1/1/13 - 12/31/14	12-Month Period Starting in First 9 Months of 2013
2014	7/1/14 - 6/30/15	1/1/14 - 12/31/15	12-Month Period Starting in First 9 Months of 2014

Incoming students enrolling in a cohort period are defined as either “new starts” or “transfers in/from” in Year 1 of a cohort. At the end of a cohort’s first year, institutions report the status of those students by indicating the number of students that transferred to another program or institution, withdrawn/dropped out, completed or will continue into the following year. No additional new students are added in subsequent years of a cohort, but the status of those continuing from each prior year will be reported at the end of each reporting period. The cohort is tracked until all students have completed, transferred, or dropped out. The EAB currently has outcomes data for three distinct cohorts that began in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

A series of descriptive statistics are presented in the sections that follow to identify patterns in the data and provide insights for programmatic and policy questions about student outcomes. All figures have been calculated using the EAB’s student outcomes data, which now encompasses three cohorts: 2012 Cohort (Year 1, 2, & 3); 2013 Cohort (Year 1 & 2); 2014 Cohort (Year 1). The 2012 Cohort is used as a point of comparison between aggregate and cumulative data. This cohort has the most comprehensive set of data for one group over the longest period of time and as such, provides the most information on student trends over time.

Key characteristics have been derived by comparisons between variables on observable traits. In calculating rates, the variables of interest are compared to the total population size. Aggregate figures are derived from the sum of student inputs (new starts and transfers) from all cohorts to analyze the entire population of EAB-approved institutions. When summary statistics are provided on subset population samples, the figures are derived using only that sample.¹

The data collected provide insights for programmatic and policy questions about student outcomes.

Completion rates have been calculated only for programs that fall within the parameters of 150% of the normal time to completion, as defined by the “150% Graduation Rate” rule required of Title IV-eligible institutions under the “Student Right-to-Know Act.”² Because the most comprehensive cohort includes only three years of observations, programs with normal completion times beyond two years are not included. Qualifying under this definition are non-degree programs begun in the 2012 & 2013 Cohorts and two-year associate’s degree programs begun in the 2012 Cohort. When examining any type of rate for individual units of analysis, schools and/or programs with fewer than 10 students enrolled in a cohort have been excluded.

¹ For example, when determining the completion or dropout rate for students in non-degree programs for the entire 2013 Cohort, total completions over the two years are compared to the total sum of students that began this program type in Year 1 of the 2013 cohort.

² <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/?charindex=G>

COHORT DATA

All Cohorts: 2012 - 2014

The number of institutions the EAB approves to serve Wisconsin residents has steadily grown in the last decade. In the last three years alone, the total number of approved institutions increased by 14% each year, due in large part to growth of distance learning programs. At present, there are 263 institutions approved by the EAB, of which 243 reported student outcomes data.³

Over the course of the last three years, schools reported that 66,819 students had enrolled in programs. While more than 20,000 students completed programs and earned some type of credential, nearly 28,000 (41%) dropped or withdrew in the same period, shown in Table 3 below.⁴ Beginning enrollment figures are the combination of students beginning a program for the first time (new starts) and students transferring into an institution's program for the first time (students transferring into a program are effectively considered as new starts).

Table 3. Total Students Enrolled in EAB-Approved Institutions

Cohort	Beginning Enrollment	Drops/ Withdrawals	Completions	Dropout Rate
2012	23411	11047	9609	47%
2013	22512	10074	6912	45%
2014	20896	6533	3612	31%
Total	66819	27654	20133	41%

Over three years,
66,819 students
enrolled in programs.
While over 20,000
students completed
& earned a credential,
nearly 28,000 (41%)
dropped out.

2012 Cohort: Years 1, 2 & 3

There were 186 institutions that reported student outcomes data for the 2012 Cohort. Following the most recent reporting period, outcomes for Years 1 – 3 were collected and compiled. Table 4 lists the total number of students that began a program in the first year of the 2012 Cohort and provides the outcomes of those 23,411 students by the end of each year.

The year-to-year drop rate column figures for Years 2 and 3 are derived from the students that were continuing from the previous year. At the end of Year 1, 11,605 students were enrolled in Year 2. Over the course of Year 2, an additional 3,518 dropped out causing a 30% drop rate for that year alone.

³ Inactive and newly approved (deferred) schools had no students to report during the cohort reporting period. In addition, the data does not reflect schools that closed during or prior to the renewal process.

⁴ As stated in the *Methodology* section, overall completion rates are not appropriate to draw conclusions on completion rates as a whole following the standard 150% graduation rate rule.

Table 4. 2012 Cohort Student Outcomes: Years 1 - 3

Year	Beginning Students	Transfers Out	Drops/Withdrawals	Completions	Enrolled in Following Year	Year-to-Year Retention Rate	Year-to-Year Drop Rate
1	23411	360	6324	5121	11606	73%	27%
2	-	361	3518	2696	4972	68%	30%
3	-	183	1205	1792	1792	75%	24%
Total	23411	904	11047	9609	-	-	47%

In addition to outcomes, Table 4 includes yearly retention rates, calculated with the formula provided by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics.⁵ Retention rates are meant to show how well schools retain or complete students year to year by calculating the percentage of students that, by the end of a 12-month period, had either completed or remained enrolled out of the total beginning enrollment. Though rarely required to maintain minimum retention rates, accreditors do require that schools make the information available to prospective students.⁶ Transfers are excluded from the calculation because the EAB does not believe that student transfers should not be held against the institution.

Retention rates provide a limited amount of information and only for a single year. They are provided here to demonstrate how they portray student outcomes as opposed to trends over time. While the outcomes data provided in Table 4 shows a yearly retention rate between 68% and 75%, approximately 11,000 out of the 23,411 students that began in 2012 dropped out, at an overall dropout rate of 47%. Put another way, while retention rates would suggest that schools are able to keep students enrolled or see them through to completion, they don’t provide an accurate picture of student outcomes when 47% of students who began a program three year ago exited without earning a credential.

Examining the data from all three years reveals that by the end of Year 3, fewer than 1,800 students out of 23,411 were continuing into a fourth year and 9,609 had completed programs. The 2012 cohort has a cumulative completion rate of only 41%.

After three years, 47% of students from the 2012 Cohort had dropped out.

2013 Cohort: Years 1 & 2

During the renewal process for the 2015 calendar year, 213 institutions reported student outcomes data for the 2013 Cohort, and had a total enrollment of 22,512 students. Now that the cohorts include more years of data, it is possible to make comparisons and predictions based on the available observations. The second year trends of the 2013 Cohort are similar to what has been observed in the 2012 Cohort. Given these similarities, it is likely that outcomes for the third year of the 2013 Cohort will closely resemble those of the 2012 Cohort’s third year.

⁵ The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires institutions participating in Title IV financial student aid programs to report retention rates.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education. Current Practice of Recognized Accreditors: Student Achievement Standards. (2015).

Table 5. 2013 Cohort Student Outcomes: Years 1 – 2

Year	Beginning Enrollment	Transfers Out	Drops/ Withdrawals	Completions	Enrolled in Following Year	Year-to-Year Retention Rate	Year-to-Year Drop Rate
1	22512	355	6688	4857	10612	70%	30%
2	-	613	3386	2055	4553	66%	32%
Total	22512	968	10074	6912	-	-	45%

2014 Cohort: Year 1

The total beginning enrollment for the 2014 Cohort was 20,896 students, detailed in Table 6 below. Despite collecting student outcomes data from 243 institutions, significantly more than in prior years, enrollments have decreased by 11% as compared to 2012 levels. While there were fewer enrollments, the 2014 Cohort had a greater proportion of student drops and fewer completions, as compared to the first year outcomes of previous cohorts. The first years in both the 2012 and 2013 Cohorts had 27% and 30% drop rates, respectively, and each saw 22% of beginning students complete, but the 2014 Cohort outcomes resulted in a 31% drop rate and only 17% of students completing in the first year.

Table 6. 2014 Cohort Student Outcomes: Year 1

Year	Beginning Enrollment	Transfers Out	Drops/ Withdrawals	Completions	Enrolled in Following Year	Year-to-Year Retention Rate	Year-to-Year Drop Rate
1	20896	448	6533	3612	10303	68%	31%

Enrollments at EAB-approved institutions have been in decline for the last three years. The 2013 Cohort's 22,512 student enrollment was a 4% decrease from year before and the 2014 Cohort's enrollment fell another 7%.⁷ The EAB approves nearly 270 institutions, a number that has grown by 14% annually. However, even with fewer enrollments, the drop rate has increased while completions dropped drastically.

Even with fewer enrollments, the drop rate has increased while completions have dropped drastically.

Chart 1 below provides an illustration to show the similarities between the first year of each cohort in terms of drops, completions and students continuing or transferring, and what the second year of student outcomes look like in the 2012 and 2013 Cohorts. Chart 2 illustrates the cumulative trends for all cohorts. The first year data seems to repeat itself in all cohorts and we are able to see additional similarities between the available second years of data. Based on this, it is reasonable to expect that following years in the 2014 Cohort will look like, if not worse than, the outcomes in the 2012 Cohort.

⁷ Part of the recent decline is attributable to the absence of Herzing University numbers. Herzing is no longer approved by the EAB, which generally reports a large number of students, and did not report outcomes this year.

Chart 1. Proportions of Students Continuing or Transferring, Completions, & Dropouts

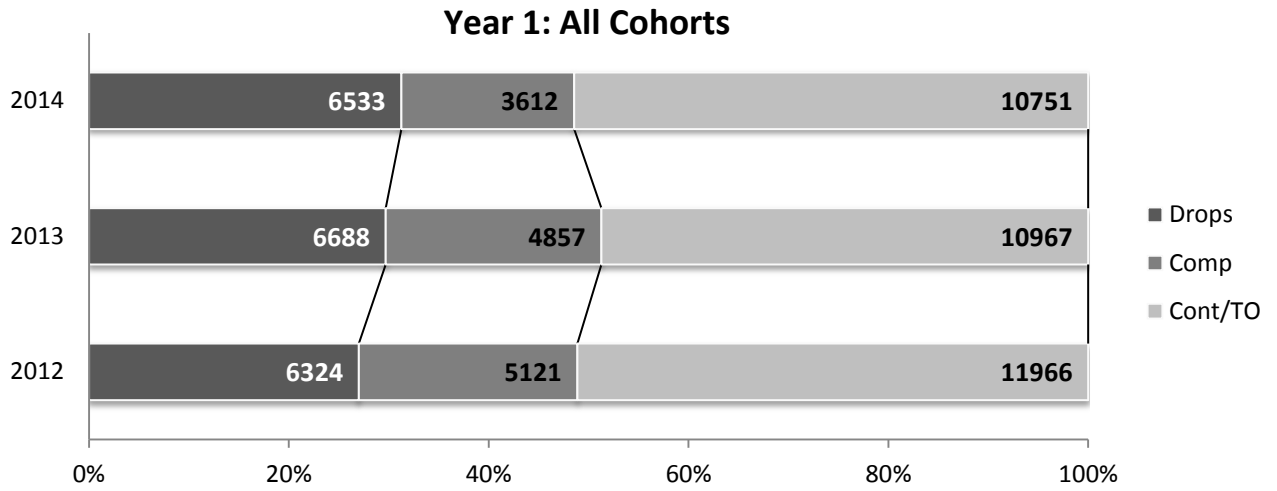


Chart 2. Proportions of Students Continuing or Transferring, Completions, & Dropouts

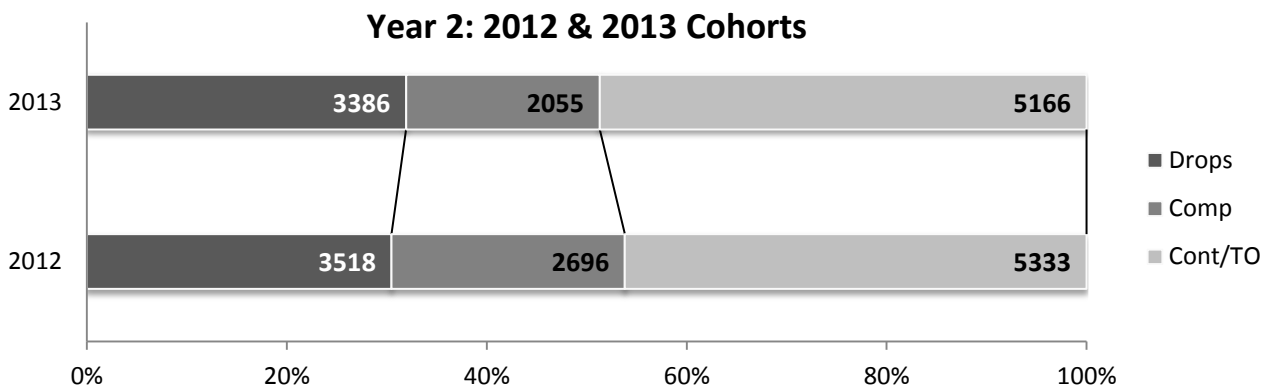
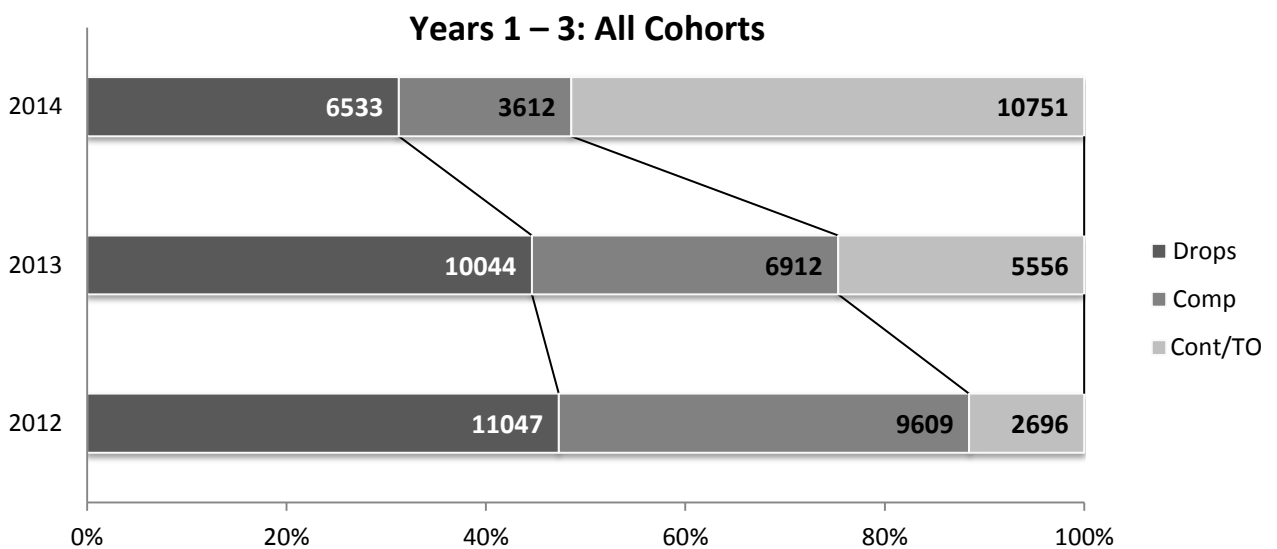


Chart 3. Cumulative Student Outcomes by Cohort: Continuing or Transferring, Completions, & Dropouts



INSTITUTIONAL DATA

Disaggregating the outcomes data into categories of institutional type reveals information about how institutional characteristics affect completion and dropout rates. For example, separating all EAB-approved schools by type of education delivery shows that students taking programs at on-ground campuses have lower dropout rates than students enrolled in online campuses. The total drop rates for all three cohorts based on these categories are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Total and Cumulative Drop Rates by Institutional Characteristics

	Total % Dropped	Total Enrollment		2012			2013		2014
		Number	Percent	1	2	3	1	2	1
On-Ground	38	37482	56	26	37	41	30	42	31
Online	45	29337	44	28	48	55	29	49	31
Non-profit	31	8673	13	23	34	46	19	33	10
For-Profit	43	58146	87	28	43	47	31	46	34
Non-Degree	15	15933	24	10	12	12	13	14	19
Degree	50	50886	76	32	51	58	35	55	35

Of the students that began an online program, 45% have dropped out when aggregating all cohort years. Examining only the 2012 Cohort, 55% of students who enrolled in an online campus in 2012 have left without a credential. By comparison, students that started programs at on-ground campuses had a 38% dropout rate for all cohorts, while 41% of the 2012 Cohort has dropped out.

55% of students who enrolled in online programs in 2012 have dropped out after 3 years.

The for-profit and non-profit status data show that these institutional sectors account for 87% and 13% of total enrollments at EAB-approved schools, respectively. In Year 3 of the 2012 Cohort, 47% of for-profit students dropped out. Perhaps more concerning is that nearly the same percentage of students dropped by Year 2 of the 2013 Cohort. In fact, for every characteristic except one, Year 2 of the 2013 Cohort had higher drop rates than in Year 2 of the 2012 Cohort.

Comparing institutions by education levels shows that schools offering only certificate and diploma programs have consistently low levels of student drops. Degree-granting institutions, however, account for 76% of total enrollments over the last three years and have consistently high levels of student drops. By the end of the 2012 Cohort's third year, 58% of students at degree-granting institutions dropped out.

The 2013 Cohort has a higher dropout rate than the 2012 Cohort after two years.

Comparing Year 1 outcomes between all three cohorts shows that the drop rates increase with each new cohort. Institutional characteristics will be discussed in greater detail in the Regression Analysis section.

Program Level Data

Of the 2,700 programs approved by the EAB, non-degree programs, which include certificate and diploma credentials, have the highest number of total beginning enrollments. As shown in Table 8 below, non-degree programs only account for approximately 20% of all program types offered at EAB-approved institutions, but 32% of all enrollments. From 2012 to 2014, 70% of all completions occurred in non-degree programs.

Table 8. Total Drops and Completions by Education Level

Education Level	Number of Programs		Beginning Enrollment		Completions		Drops		Drop Rates
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
Non-Degree	541	20	21176	32	14051	70	4456	16	21
Associate's	433	16	20516	31	2783	14	12194	44	59
Bachelor's	817	30	18503	28	1878	9	9058	33	49
Advanced	909	34	6624	10	1421	7	1946	7	29
Total	2700	-	66819	-	20133	-	27654	-	41

By comparison, two-year associate’s degree programs make up 16% of EAB-approved programs and account for 31% of total enrollments. Non-degree and associate’s degree programs are similar in that they enroll a greater percentage of students than might be expected based on their number of available programs. However, associate programs only account for 14% of total completions, but were responsible for 44% of all student drops in all program types. Associate’s degree programs have disproportionately high drops as compared to their share of total student enrollments. In the last three years, EAB-approved institutions have issued more than 14,000 certificates or diplomas, as compared to less than 2,800 associate’s degrees.

While it is still too early to calculate reliable completion rates for Bachelor’s degree programs based on the available data, it is possible to make predictions based on observed trends. Of the students who began a Bachelor’s degree program in 2012, 61% have dropped out while 20% have completed by the end of the third year. After accounting for students that transferred out, only 13% of the beginning enrollment remains. Assuming that the yearly drop rate doesn’t increase from the previous year, the most optimistic situation would be that another 10% complete programs by the end of Year 4 of the 2012 Cohort, bringing the total to a 30% completion rate for Bachelor’s degree programs.

- Non-degree programs enroll 32% of all students and account for 70% of all completions.
- At 44%, associate’s degree programs have disproportionately high drops for only enrolling 31% of all students.
- Of students who began a Bachelor’s degree program in 2012, only 20% have completed while 61% have dropped out.

This is the best-case scenario for Bachelor’s degree completions in the 2012 Cohort after applying observed trends from Years 1 through 3, while being generous with the assumptions. A detailed breakdown of the education levels by cohorts is provided in Appendix A.

The benefit to using drop rates as signifiers of institutional performance is that the effects of student drops and withdrawals are immediately evident.

Prior years’ analyses have provided important descriptive information about the EAB-approved institutions that are serving Wisconsin students. The straightforward analysis used to construct Table 7 continues to point to institutional characteristics with the highest levels of student drops. Though the descriptive analyses have illustrated trends, additional analyses can now be performed. Having accumulated three distinct cohorts and several years of data, there is a sufficient number of observations to begin making inferences and predictions for future cohorts. Applying a linear regression model, we can provide empirical evidence that a relationship exists between institutional characteristics and student outcomes.

This analysis controls for factors that may affect the dependent variable. In this case, the output being examined is the drop rate against independent variables. The equation below provides the model used to estimate the drop rate for students, as a function of institutional characteristics:

$$y_D = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Online}) + \beta_2(\text{For-Profit}) + \beta_3(\text{Degree}) + \beta_4(\text{Ed Level}) + \varepsilon$$

The *Online* variable indicates education delivery as online or on-ground, the *For-Profit* variable indicates institutional control by for-profit or non-profit status, and the *Degree* variable specifies whether an institution is primarily degree- or non-degree-granting. A dummy variable was constructed for *Ed Level* to include the type of credential being sought (non-degree, associate’s, Bachelor’s, or advanced degree), and when interpreting this variable, all coefficients are referenced against the baseline education level of “non-degree.”

This model was selected as the best fit for variation observed in drop rates after considerable testing. The model was applied to all available data and to individual cohorts. Output estimates for all regressions are found in Table 9. The full regression results, with standard errors and R² terms, for individual cohorts and cumulative cohort data can be found in Appendix B.

Table 9. Cohort Drop Rate Regression Estimates of Institutional & Programmatic Characteristics

	2012	2013	2014	Cohort Aggregate
Online Delivery	11.230*	11.515*	0.631	5.887*
For-Profit Status	16.105*	20.860*	23.975*	18.873*
Degree-Granting Institution	35.259*	34.301*	21.181*	29.612*
Education Level (Non-Degree)				
Associate's Degree	15.974*	14.858*	12.257*	15.879*
Bachelor's Degree	10.493 ⁺	1.082	6.672 [^]	7.946*
Advanced Degree	-16.499*	-15.950*	-4.033	-10.713*
Observations (N =)	516	457	456	1429

[^] p < 0.05 ⁺ p < 0.01 *p < 0.001

Results for the 2012 Cohort indicate that the outcomes of students attending online institutions are associated with cohort dropout rates 11% higher in online programs compared to those offered on-ground, 16% higher dropout rates at for-profit institutions compared to non-profits and 35% greater dropout rates at primarily degree-granting institutions compared to non-degree. The symbols next to the coefficients indicate the p-value, or statistical significance of the coefficient, and values less than 0.05 ([^]) are ignored. A p-value of 0.001 (*) indicates that we can be confident in the accuracy of the results.

The benefit to using drop rates as signifiers of institutional performance is that student drops/withdrawals are immediately evident. Completion rates, however, require a longer period of time before causal claims may be made due to the length of time required to complete certain programs. For this reason, a similar model was constructed to examine completion rates, but with restrictions to the observations included. The model used to make predictions on completions rates below was applied only to the 2012 Cohort, y_{Ct} , with three years of data, and only for education levels at certificate, diploma and associate's degree levels:

$$y_C = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Online}) + \beta_2(\text{For-Profit}) + \beta_3(\text{Degree}) + \varepsilon$$

Associate's degree education levels have normal completion times of two years and non-degree credentials, such as certificates and diplomas, have shorter completion times. As described in the Methodology section, programs that began in 2012 have fallen within 150% of normal completion time. The linear regression output shown in Table 10 provides evidence that online programs are associated with 18.9% lower completion rates than programs delivered at on-ground campuses. Similarly, for-profit institutions have 18.6% lower completion rates as compared to non-profit institutions.

For institutions that primarily offer degree-granting programs, the cohort completion rate for associate's degrees and non-degrees are 51% lower than schools only offering non-degree programs. This finding is not surprising given that non-degree institutions have shorter programs and we have found non-degree programs to have very high completion rates generally as well as the lowest drop rates.

Table 10. 2012 Cohort Completion Rate Regression Estimates for Associate's & Non-Degree Programs

Variables	Coefficient	
Online Delivery	-18.993 *	Although the data indicate that online and degree-granting institutions consistently exhibit the lowest performance in terms of retaining students through completion, the regression analysis provides a distinct relationship between the likelihood of attrition and institutional characteristics.
For-Profit Status	-18.635 *	
Degree-Granting Institution	-51.356 *	
Observations (N=)	279	

[^] p < 0.05 ⁺ p < 0.01 *p < 0.001

When comparing institutional types...

Dropout rates are greater by:

- 11% at online vs. on-ground
- 16% at for-profit vs. non-profit
- 35% at degree vs. non-degree

Completion rates are lower by:

- 19% at online vs. on-ground
- 19% at for-profit vs. non-profit
- 51% at degree vs. non-degree

DISCUSSION

Student Population

Once in 2013 and again in 2014, the EAB contacted institutions with the most concerning student outcomes to ask what was being done to address the high student dropout rates. Overwhelmingly, variations of the same response were received: These institutions, all of which were for-profit, enroll a nontraditional population that faces academic barriers to completion. Research confirms that for-profit institutions disproportionately enroll a greater number of nontraditional students, typically characterized by a lower socioeconomic status, part-time attendance, and are age 25 or older. Despite the institutions' awareness and claims that they are making efforts to improve student success, those efforts have not improved outcomes.

By their own admission, schools acknowledge enrolling a student population that is inherently difficult to serve. The EAB recognizes that these institutions meet a market demand and provide opportunities for students not well served in traditional settings. However, if the institutions with high dropout rates and few completions want to be successful working with a nontraditional student population, it is necessary that institutions develop effective methods to address the challenges faced by this population in order for students to succeed.

Data Collection & Reciprocity

The policy implications of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) remain relevant to the discussion of student outcomes. Legislation was recently signed into law to create the Wisconsin Distance Learning Authorization Board, which has the authority to enter into SARA. Under this agreement, coordinated through the Midwest Higher Education Compact, states agree to defer evaluation and approval of online institutions to the states in which schools are headquartered.

The EAB remains concerned with the potential implications surrounding SARA membership. Once Wisconsin has officially entered into this agreement, the EAB will be stripped of its current oversight and consumer protection at those institutions, those that the analysis has identified as the greatest cause for concern with student outcomes and consumer protection.

The data collection at the EAB is unique in the level of detail it provides specific to Wisconsin students. While federal data reporting requirements are useful, they are limited to institutions participating in Title IV Federal Student Aid. Those data sets exclude information on smaller, non-degree schools operating in Wisconsin that choose not to participate in Title IV. Perhaps more importantly, the institutions that do report under Title IV eligibility rules are only required to report the majority of measures on first-time, full-time students.

If institutions with high drop rates and few completions want to be successful working with a nontraditional student population, it is necessary that institutions develop effective methods to address the difficulties faced by this population in order for students to succeed.

The EAB dataset provides evidence that more students dropout than graduate and the situation has gotten worse every year.

Considering what is known about the student population attending EAB-approved institutions, a large percentage of students do not fall into that category. In many instances, the EAB is the only entity examining the student outcomes for this population. Under SARA, student outcomes will not be collected to this degree and it is likely that online, for-profit institutions outside of Wisconsin with consistently poor outcomes will not be held accountable for Wisconsin students' results.

This outcomes report likely marks the end of a series of annual reports on the state of online education in Wisconsin. As a result of SARA, the EAB will no longer have the ability to collect student outcomes data for students in online programs at 117 institutions. The first report provided crucial insight into the educational outcomes of students attending college online and helped to provide a greater overview of trends and patterns. Despite the role these reports play in understanding online education and communicating issues, the current report format will end without access to online outcomes data for Wisconsin students.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing three years of student outcomes data has identified the institutional and program types with consistently low levels of performance. Tracking students throughout the years spent in institutions reveals what happens to them and how they move through institutions over time. A review of the three years included in the 2012 Cohort has shown that nearly half of the students who enrolled in programs have already dropped out by the third year. For-profit institutions clearly have trouble seeing students through to completion. The EAB dataset provides evidence that more students dropout than graduate and the situation has gotten worse every year. In an economy that places a premium on education in the labor market, a population that moves in and out of school accumulating debt, but never earning a credential, is reason for concern.

As evidenced by the breakdown of program-level outcomes and the completion rate regression, non-degree programs clearly provide a greater probability of completion. Students are more successful in non-degree programs as opposed to degree level programs with longer completion times, such as associate's and bachelor's degrees. Considering that nearly a third of total enrollments and the highest dropout rates are in associate programs, student success in these programs is of great interest and importance. Students make the decision to attend a postsecondary education institution with the expectation that they will receive a positive return on investment. Those students that leave prior to completion do not earn a credential, but do gather debt and experience an opportunity cost. It will be crucial to continue examining associate's degree programs and how well institutions respond to the need for improvement in these programs.

Appendix A. Programs by Education Level and Cohort Start Year

Education Level	Cohort Start Year	Beginning Enrollment	Completions	Drops	Drop Rate
Non-Degree	2012	7491	5647	1536	21%
	2013	7383	5166	1534	21%
	2014	6080	3110	1341	22%
	Total	20954	13923	4411	21%
Associate's Degree	2012	7409	1807	4960	67%
	2013	6802	807	4466	66%
	2014	6292	165	2768	44%
	Total	20503	2779	12194	59%
Bachelor's Degree	2012	6086	1221	3691	61%
	2013	6415	568	3395	53%
	2014	6002	89	1972	33%
	Total	18503	1878	9058	49%
Advanced Degree	2012	2425	902	859	35%
	2013	1912	299	649	34%
	2014	2287	220	438	19%
	Total	6624	1421	1946	29%

Appendix B. Regression Outputs

Number of observations	1,429
F(6, 1422)	191.26
Prob > F	0
R-squared	0.3959
Root MSE	21.439

Total Drop Rate: All Cohorts*	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t	[95% Confidence Interval]	
Online Delivery	5.887132	1.295954	4.54	0	3.344946	8.429318
For-Profit Status	18.87311	1.89745	9.95	0	15.15101	22.59521
Degree-Granting Institution	29.61162	2.106019	14.06	0	25.48038	33.74286
Education Level (Non-Degree)						
Associate's Degree	15.87876	2.111337	7.52	0	11.73709	20.02043
Bachelor's Degree	7.945707	2.121571	3.75	0	3.783962	12.10745
Advanced Degree	-10.71331	2.438553	-4.39	0	-15.49686	-5.929765
Intercept	-6.343135	2.23036	-2.84	0.005	-10.71828	-1.967986

Number of observations	516
F(6, 509)	122.3
Prob > F	0
R-squared	0.5256
Root MSE	19.341

Drop Rate: 2012 Cohort*	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t	[95% Confidence Interval]	
Online Delivery	11.23036	1.999767	5.62	0	7.301552	15.15918
For-Profit Status	16.10537	2.816839	5.72	0	10.57131	21.63944
Degree-Granting Institution	35.25853	3.55314	9.92	0	28.2779	42.23915
Education Level (Non-Degree)						
Associate's Degree	15.97405	3.480197	4.59	0	9.136729	22.81137
Bachelor's Degree	10.49301	3.569161	2.94	0.003	3.480913	17.50512
Advanced Degree	-16.49877	4.330727	-3.81	0	-25.00707	-7.990474
Intercept	-3.663983	3.323026	-1.1	0.271	-10.19252	2.864552

Number of obs	457
F(6, 450)	65.52
Prob > F	0
R-squared	0.477
Root MSE	19.931

Drop Rate: 2013 Cohort*	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t	[95% Confidence Interval]	
Online Delivery	11.51492	2.204828	5.22	0	7.181879	15.84795
For-Profit Status	20.86038	3.101797	6.73	0	14.76457	26.95618
Degree-Granting Institution	34.30066	3.611803	9.5	0	27.20256	41.39875
Education Level (Non-Degree)						
Associate's Degree	14.85755	3.387523	4.39	0	8.200218	21.51488
Bachelor's Degree	1.081647	3.517313	0.31	0.759	-5.830751	7.994046
Advanced Degree	-15.95023	4.363472	-3.66	0	-24.52554	-7.37492
Intercept	-6.993898	4.058585	-1.72	0.086	-14.97003	0.982235

Number of obs	456
F(6, 449)	47.69
Prob > F	0
R-squared	0.3792
Root MSE	17.877

Drop Rate: 2014 Cohort*	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t	[95% Confidence Interval]	
Online Delivery	0.6309561	1.776962	0.36	0.723	-2.861239	4.123151
For-Profit Status	23.97451	2.511334	9.55	0	19.03908	28.90994
Degree-Granting Institution	21.18077	3.137128	6.75	0	15.01549	27.34604
Education Level (Non-Degree)						
Associate's Degree	12.25676	3.218253	3.81	0	5.932048	18.58146
Bachelor's Degree	6.672024	3.134725	2.13	0.034	0.5114691	12.83258
Advanced Degree	-4.033248	3.364096	-1.2	0.231	-10.64458	2.578081
Intercept	-13.25953	3.257906	-4.07	0	-19.66217	-6.856894

Number of obs	279
F(3, 275)	149.03
Prob > F	0
R-squared	0.5967
Root MSE	20.525

Completion Rate: 2012 Cohort*	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P>t	[95% Confidence Interval]	
Online Delivery	-18.99314	3.094704	-6.14	0	-25.08546	-12.90082
For-Profit Status	-18.63466	6.754625	-2.76	0.006	-31.932	-5.337314
Degree-Granting Institution	-51.35642	2.864433	-17.93	0	-56.99543	-45.71742
Intercept	103.5579	7.384279	14.02	0	89.02101	118.0948

*Includes only observations with total enrollments greater than 9