OSU study blasts dropout figures

By Gary Kiefer

date: OSU Reporter 12-3-81

More than half Ohio State University's entering students drop out without earning degrees, and 25 percent quit school during their freshman year, according to an OSU study made public Thursday.

The report states that OSU's attrition rate is much higher than comparable institutions and represents "a serious waste of resources."

But the nine-member commission which conducted the study, also found that much of the dropout problem is the result of OSU's "unusual position as a large, open-admissions, land-grant research institution."

THE STUDY, which was distributed to OSU deans at a meeting Thursday, was compiled over the last two years by the University Commission on Student Attrition and Retention.

It contains nine recommendations for lowering the dropout rate, ranging from improving academic counseling for new students to modifying University College, established in 1969 to handle all incoming freshmen.

Entering students usually spend a year in University College, on the West Campus, before beginning their major areas of study.

Commission Chairman Ronald C. Roshottom, a professor of French, said the purpose of the report was to determine why OSU has a high dropout rate and how the university might be able to identify the students who need the most help to complete their college education.

He said commission members determined that there is a new "profile" of college students today — they are "older, less committed to 'finishing' in four years, more interested in combining an education with experience in the non-academic world."

USING THE class that entered in the fall of 1973 as an example, the commission found that only 27 percent of the students had obtained degrees after four years, while 42.2 percent had earned degrees after five years.

The study also showed that black students have a significantly lower graduation rate, about 21 percent after five years. The commission said that may be because blacks are taking "undemanding" high school courses or attending "weak" high schools.

Terry Roark, OSU associate provost and a commission member, said the attrition rate has remained much the same for the last 20 years.

He said it results largely from the state's open admissions policy, which permits any high school graduate to enroll in a state university.

"We want to make the point that all paths to Ohio State are not equally likely to result in a degree," he said. "The less prepared a student is in coming here, the more likely it is that he or she will not be successful."

JOHN MOUNT, dean of University College, said attrition rates have been a concern of every college he knows of in the more than 40 years he has been associated with OSU.

Mount, who said he generally endorses the study's recommendations, said progress has been made in attracting more students who have higher college-entrance test scores.

The group also reported that "reasons for attrition at Ohio State are quite similar to those at comparable universities . . . lack of career goals, confusion about the value of a college education, little bonding with their institution, problems with the curriculum, personal considerations."

It found the attrition rate highest among Franklin County students, many of whom are commuters. But other large-city counties such as Hamilton (Cincinnati) and Cuyahoga (Cleveland) also had rates above the state average.

TO IMPROVE the attrition rate, the group's recommendations include:

- Use OSU's computer-stored data on students to develop a "profile" of characteristics that might identify students likely to drop out.

- Focus recruiting efforts not only on top scholars, but American College Test scores above 25, but also on students in the score range of 21 to 25. The average test score of incoming OSU students now is 20.7.

- Have other colleges take responsibility for academic counseling now done in University College.

- Consider other changes in the University College structure. Mentioned as a "valid option" was moving the University College from West Campus to the main campus so new students won't feel isolated from others.

- Cut down the number of "Basic Education Requirement" courses available to new students from the more than 300 offered now, which promotes a "supermarket approach to general education" and in which students are "not knowledgeable shoppers."

The group also endorsed "conditional" admission for students who have not completed a college-preparatory curriculum in high school.

OSU trustees have adopted such a policy, which is to begin in 1983 or later.
Official says minorities have high drop-out rate

Though most emphasis is on recruiting minorities at OSU, there is a serious problem of retaining them in academic programs.

A report recently done by Ronald C. Rosbottom, professor of romance languages, stated black men have a one in 20 chance of graduating from a university. At the same time, white males have better than 50 percent chance of graduating.

The “Rosbottom report” dealt strictly with academic statistics on retention and attrition.

A survey recently conducted by the Office of Student Life tried to find “outside” influences that might cause minority students to drop out.

The data from the survey, called “The Needs Assessment Survey,” have been collected, but findings and statistics will not be released for two weeks.

Mitchel D. Livingston, dean of student life, who is overseeing the project, said he believes there are several factors as to why minority students are giving up on college.

These factors specifically include poor academic preparation; poor social adjustment; lack of motivation; past patterns of behavior, such as the priority of education in families and previous study habits; and a feeling of alienation.

Livingston also thinks there are problems in communication with the minority students.

“There’s an information void that prevents minority students from using our office as well as they could,” he said. “They’re getting to us too late,” he added.
Program may curb minority drop-outs

By Tracy Lemmon
Lantern staff writer 1-27-83

The Office of Black Student Programs will offer a new program to help prevent black and minority students from dropping out of OSU.

Paul Cook, program coordinator, said the office will sponsor study groups for minority students in beginning math and English classes.

The idea was developed during summer quarter to lessen the “debilitating effect” of students dropping out, he said.

Minority students have a higher drop-out rate because of the political and economic underdevelopment and powerlessness of black communities, Cook said.

Each study group will have from three to 10 students. The target courses are mathematics from pre-100 level through the 130 series and English courses up through English 110.

The students will set up their own meeting times and study methods. About 12 upperclassmen and graduate students will advise the groups, but students will conduct the sessions themselves.

"The best way to test something you know is to teach someone else," Cook said.

Tutors also will be available to help the students, but the object of the program is to have the students help themselves, Cook said.

The program began Monday and will include a mix of high, low and borderline students.

At the end of the quarter, the office will look at the students' classroom performances and compare them to national test scores for minorities.

If successful, the office will expand the program spring quarter and include psychology and biology classes.

Cook said he eventually would like to see the program include every OSU course and be offered to graduate students as well as undergraduates.

Cook estimated the program could have more than 30 study groups and would need about three staff members.

The expanded program would cost about $70,000, including salaries for group leaders and staff.

For now, “the Office of Black Student Programs is picking up the tab — administration, publicity and brochures,” he said.

Getting the word out about the program will involve speaking to classes, black fraternities and sororities and black student organizations. The Department of Black Studies also will promote the study groups.

Although the program is aimed at minority students, anyone can participate, he said.

Mitchel D. Livingston, dean of student life, said the Office of Student Life has been talking about the program for the past few years.

“We decided we would go ahead and commit ourselves to it. Hopefully, they (students) will take advantage of the support service we're offering,” he said.

Both Cook and Livingston said the program is unusual because upperclassmen are serving as the leaders.

Group leader Madison Pugh, a junior from Akron, said the program will emphasize “the importance of studying and academic requirements.”

Michael Jones, a group leader and a junior from Columbus, said he hopes the program helps students realize their academic potential.

"It (the program) will save a heck of a lot of time and headaches," he added.

For information about joining a study group or becoming a group leader, contact the Office of Black Student Programs in Ohio Union 345.
OSU plan helps cut dropout rate

By Tom Sheehan
Dispatch OSU Reporter

A smaller percentage of Ohio State University freshmen are dropping out of college nowadays, and Provost Diether Haenicke thinks it is a trend that will continue.

He credited the trend to a program that helps students better prepare for college and a drive to attract more students who score high on college-entrance tests.

For the decade ending with the 1981-82 school year, about 25 percent of OSU autumn-quarter freshmen dropped out annually.

AFTER OFFICIALS launched an aggressive program in 1982 to combat that rate, that rate was reduced to 22 percent of the 7,000 entering freshmen in the 1982-83 school year.

Haenicke, who is also the vice president for academic affairs, has set 20 percent as the goal for the current school year.

OSU officials began looking at ways to reduce the dropout rate after a university commission reported in early 1982 that OSU had the highest rate for first-quarter freshmen among 50 universities surveyed.

OSU is hampered in such comparisons by the state's open admissions law, which allows any Ohio high school graduate to enroll there, Haenicke said. He added that tougher entrance requirements would help temper that rate.

He noted that incoming freshmen already are better prepared because the trend in high school is for students to take tougher courses.

Haenicke said would-be freshmen who didn't take adequate college preparatory courses are asked to come in for a counseling session with a professor.

ABOUT 1,000 students in each of the past two years have been counseled.

Haenicke said the students are given options such as entering college in the summer to do catch-up work, going to a community college first, or taking non-credit remedial courses.

Officials also have intensi-

Provost Diether Haenicke

filed their efforts in the recruitment of top students.

He said officials contact students who indicate on college entrance exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) that Ohio State is one of the three colleges they are interested in attending.

They are sent information about OSU and about the availability of scholarships and other financial aids.

He said OSU is probably now getting about four or five times as many high-scoring SAT students as it did two or three years ago.
OSU sees decline in dropout rate

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The chart indicates the increasing retention rates for subsequent years after enrollment. The second column on the left displays the number of freshman enrolled at the Columbus campus during autumn quarter of the indicated year. Following columns show the percentage of students that returned the following year.

4-20-84

By Elaine Nortman
Lantern staff writer

Fewer OSU students are dropping out because of active recruitment of better qualified students, improved high school preparation, and more on-campus tutoring and counseling, according to James J. Mager, director of admissions.

University statistics show about 21 percent of the 1982 freshman class did not return for autumn quarter 1983, compared with 27 percent of the 1973 class that dropped out the second year.

Although the change appears to be relatively minor, David C. Marsh, acting director of the Office of Planning Studies, said it translates to more than 400 students out of a class of 7,000.

A major factor in student retention is high school preparation, Marsh said. He said ACT scores and high school class rank have proven to be accurate indicators of college success.

Students who score above 26 on the ACT and are in the upper 60 percent of their high school class have a dropout rate of about seven or eight percent compared to a 20 percent rate for the entire freshman class, Marsh said.

Mager said a 1982 freshmen class study showed that 29 percent of incoming freshmen with less than 4 units of English or less than three units of math dropped out before the sophomore year.

However, students with an adequate preparation in math and English had an 11 percent higher retention rate and their grades were better than the freshmen classes as a whole.

Students with a high risk of falling can receive help through an university summer counseling program designed to help decrease dropout rates, said William H. Halverson, associate dean of University College.

Admission applicants who rank in the lower third of their class are required to come to campus before being enrolled, Halverson said. During the visit they are counseled about performance standards regarding course work, grades and whether they should attend college, Halverson added.

Of the approximately 800 applicants who would have to participate in counseling in order to be accepted, only about 500 actually come, Halverson said, adding that of those, 323 to 350 would actually enroll as freshmen.

The purpose of a university is to educate and, therefore, it should try to retain as many of its students as possible, he said. The university prefers to try meeting the quotas by limiting the number of new students being admitted instead of relying on dropouts, Mager added.
New OSU policies to cut dropout rate

By Maria Lassaletta
Lantern staff writer

Although Ohio State's freshman dropout rate is lower than the national average for public colleges and universities, OSU officials are working to decrease it further.

OSU's dropout rate for the freshmen class entering in Autumn 1994 is 23 percent, according to Dr. James Mager, assistant vice president for enrollment management.

The national freshman dropout rate for public institutions is 29 percent, according to the American College Testing Program.

"We've noticed that about two-thirds of those who drop out are leaving the university with less than a 2.0 GPA, or if it's really a bad year, they are academically dismissed," Mager said.

One way staff at OSU are trying to decrease the dropout rate is by raising admission standards.

"We are trying to bring in students that have at least a 21 score or above on the ACT exam, and a 990 or above SAT score," Mager said.

There were 5,800 freshman in the class that began in Autumn 1995, 1,200 of them placed in remedial math or English, Mager said.

"Our target for 1996 is to try to enroll 600 fewer students in the lower part of the class," he said.

Mager said other reasons why students drop out include a lack of commitment or preparation on their part, financial problems, working and environment problems, roommate problems, parking issues and difficulty with the quality of instruction, including classes being too big and instructors being hard to understand.

Efforts to examine and improve the undergraduate experience at Ohio State were made in 1995 by the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience (CUE). The OSU Board of Trustees earmarked money in the 1997 budget to implement some of the committee's recommendations.

"The best way to retain students is to address their problems and make the university environment as pleasant as possible," said Martha Garland, dean of undergraduate studies and CUE co-chair.