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# Use of DFW Rates-Rationale and Benchmarks

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# Use of DFW Rates-Rationale and Benchmarks

Submitted by: Greg Brock

8/23/2011

## Question:

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Why is the DFW rate being used to evaluate courses and teaching? Where is there a list of refereed research/evidence showing a link between DFW rates and teaching/learning by students? Where did the DFW rate=25% benchmark given to all chairs in my college come from?

Why is a "W" treated the same as a "DF"?

## Rationale:

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The DFW rate is being used campus-wide. If chairs in COBA don't know where the 25% benchmark came from its likely other chairs across campus don't either, so this is not a college specific concern. Chairs tell me they don't know where the 25% came from. An associate dean told me "its from the president, its policy" but also did not tell me where the 25% came from.

## Response:

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The SEC has approved this RFI for inclusion on the agenda of the September meeting of the Faculty Senate. We request that Provost Moore identify the appropriate respondent(s).

From Dr. Ted Moore, 9-18-2011

Question: (1) Why is the DFW rate being used to evaluate courses and teaching?

(2) Where is there a list of refereed research/evidence showing a link between DFW rates and teaching/learning by students?

(3) Where did the DFW rate =25% benchmark given to all chairs in y college come from?

(4) Why is a “W” treated the same as a “DF”?

Q1: DFW rates should be used as diagnostics just as we use the rest of the grade distribution. We would be understandably concerned over courses for which all “A”s are given, just as we are concerned if many students are doing poor work systematically. Departments and programs should be analyzing these rates; there has been no mandate to “evaluate” courses or teaching based on DFW frequencies.

If many students are not being successful in a course, we should ask why not. Why aren’t they learning? By virtue of exploring this question, some departments have changed their delivery of a course’s content and improved student pass rates without lowering standards.

Q2: We have used data from our First Year Experience program to help us learn about our own students’ learning and successes. Since 2006, our course withdrawal rates have dropped from 10.5% to 5% in 2010 because we questioned why so many students were withdrawing and not persisting in their coursework. For first-year students, there is also data to show an increase in GPA due to the limited withdrawal policy.

This link provides FYE information

<http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/fye/QEP.htm>

The Quality Enhancement Plan submitted for the SACS 5th Year Report was also posted in Spring 2011 and can address the university’s interest in Student Success:

<http://sacs.georgiasouthern.edu/>

Fact Book information, publically available information for each year, can be found here:

<http://services.georgiasouthern.edu/osra/fb/factbook2.htm>

Q3: We are not aware of a 25% mandated benchmark.

Q4: They are not the same, but all three indicate that a student did not complete a course with average or better performance. We are interested in “W” because we care about college completion and progression.

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