

Summary Findings from the Early Leaver Survey (Students Who Withdrew from Fleming before the completion of their program) 2011/12 to 2016/17

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The issue of ‘retention’ is always under discussion and debate within the College system and so further investigation to attain a better understand of WHY students leave Fleming before graduation is warranted. The Institutional Research Office is not a subject matter expert by any means, however, we offer information on an important study into ‘why students withdraw’, using *the Early Leaver Survey*, conducted annually. In analyzing the data over a 5-year period, we are able to identify certain prominent factors and trends that give us clues as to possible predictors of early withdrawal. The following report is a summary of the data collected in the *Early Leaver Survey* over the time period 2011/12 to 2016/17. Where applicable, results from the *First Year Student Survey (FYSS)* are provided for comparison purposes. The *FYSS* survey is sent to all students in their first semester, however it does exclude post-graduate students. It is administered via the web and as a telephone survey.

*Please note that some results reported are multiple select questions and will not sum to 100%. These questions are flagged with an **.*

FACTORS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY STUDENT WITHDRAWAL

- ❖ **Level of Education:** We found that the higher the previous education a student had, the less likely they were to withdraw early from a program. **10%** of students who withdrew had SOME UNIVERSITY/OR A UNIVERSITY DEGREE prior to attending Fleming, while **20%** had SOME COLLEGE/COLLEGE DIPLOMA. This is compared to over **two thirds** of students who withdrew having a HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA as their highest education attained.
(Results from the FYSS show that close to 15% of students had some university/university degree, almost a quarter had some college/college diploma and close to 60% had their high school diploma prior to coming to Fleming.)

- ❖ In terms of the level of high school courses taken prior to college admission:
 - Over **40%** of those who withdrew early took most high school courses at the COLLEGE/GENERAL level,
 - just **under 25%** took most courses at the UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE level (trend is on the incline – more students who took courses at this level are leaving college early than they did in the past) and
 - **25%** took most courses at the UNIVERSITY/ADVANCE level (this trend has been on the decline – student who took courses at this level are leaving college early less often than in past years).

- ❖ **Financial Support****: The three main sources of income students who withdrew relied on while attending Fleming, were student loan programs, personal savings and financial help from parents.
 - ❖ **One Third** planned on working full-time/part-time
 - ❖ **Half** relied on STUDENT LOAN programs
 - ❖ **Less than a third** relied on personal SAVINGS (more students are relying on SAVINGS than they did in the past)
 - ❖ **A quarter** relied on FINANCIAL HELP FROM PARENTS
(Students were asked what source(s) of income they relied on while attending Fleming via the FYSS. Results show that 50% of students relied on full or part-time work, 60% relied on student loan programs, just under 50% relied on savings and over a third relied on financial help from parents.)
- ❖ **Working Students: Two thirds** of students who withdrew DID NOT WORK while attending Fleming, while **20%** worked LESS THAN 15 HRS/WEEK and **10%** WORKED 16-24 HRS/WEEK.
(Students were asked if they planned on working while attending Fleming via the FYSS. Just over a third of students did not plan on working while attending Fleming, 40% planned on working less than 15 hours/week and 20% planned on working 16-24 hours/week.)
- ❖ **Student Engagement: 75%** of students who withdrew attended Fleming's ORIENTATION and **15%** were involved in EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES while at Fleming.
- ❖ **College Experience: 70%** of students who withdrew indicated that this semester was their FIRST TIME IN COLLEGE.
(88% of students reported this was their first time attending Fleming - FYSS.)
- ❖ **Relocation: Over half** of those who withdrew had to RELOCATE in-order to attend Fleming (trend is on a slight decline).
(Close to 60% of students had to relocate to attend Fleming - FYSS.)
- ❖ **Choice of College: Over 80%** of students who withdrew reported that Fleming was their FIRST CHOICE COLLEGE (fewer students are reporting Fleming as their first choice than in the past).
(Close to 80% of students reported Fleming was their first-choice college - FYSS.)
- ❖ **Choice of Program: Over 75%** indicated that the program they enrolled in was their FIRST CHOICE PROGRAM (more students are indicating that the program they withdrew from was their first choice than in the past)

❖ Reasons Students gave for Withdrawal**

- ❖ Consistent findings over the last five years show that **more than 25%** of students report one or more the following four reasons for withdrawal:
 - HEALTH related problems
 - Experienced too much STRESS
 - Program not specific to CAREER GOALS
 - LOSS OF INTEREST in academic program

(Results from the FYSS show that 97% of students felt they were in the right program.)

However, close to 30% of students who left the college after partially completing their program, indicated they didn't like the program / it wasn't for them, and close to 10% indicated they left due to health reasons.

- ❖ So how are students feeling about withdrawing:
 - **Two thirds** of students were COMFORTABLE with their decision to withdraw from Fleming.
 - Students who withdrew were most likely to TALK with family, an advisor or fellow student prior to withdrawing from Fleming**.
 - **Over half** talked with FAMILY member
 - **One third** talked with ACADEMIC ADVISOR (this has increased significantly in last two years)
 - **A quarter** talked with a FELLOW STUDENT

If there is a point of active intervention it is probably here, but it may be too late to dissuade students from withdrawing at this point.

❖ Student Satisfaction

- ❖ **Over 90%** of students who withdrew were SATISFIED/VERY SATISFIED with their experience while at Fleming.
- ❖ **95%** of students would RECOMMEND Fleming to others seeking post-secondary.
- ❖ **90%** of students were SATISFIED/VERY SATISFIED with Health Services, Financial Aid and Learning Support Services while Counselling, Advising services had slightly lower satisfaction rating falling **below 90%**
- ❖ Looking at usage with service areas, results show that on average **40%** of students used Financial Aid, **a quarter** used counselling and less than **20%** used the remaining three services (Health, Learning Support, and Advising).

(Results from the FYSS show that 99% of students consider Fleming to be an excellent college and 99% felt they made the right decision to come to Fleming.)

❖ Future Plans with Post-Secondary Education

- ❖ **Less than a third** of students who withdrew planned to RETURN TO POST-SECONDARY education within 6 months (and this trend is on the decline) but **a third** did planned to RETURN TO POST-SECONDARY education within 1-2 years.
- ❖ **Under a third** planned to re-enter the SAME program at Fleming on a full-time basis (however, this trend is on the incline) and an additional **25%** planned to begin a DIFFERENT program at Fleming on a full-time basis.
- ❖ **20%** had NO PLANS for future involvement with Fleming (fewer students are reporting that they have no future plans with Fleming than in the past)

❖ Activity After Withdrawing from Fleming

- ❖ **Two thirds** of students who withdrew were WORKING FULL or PART TIME at the time of the survey call.
- ❖ **10%** were attending COLLEGE.
- ❖ Just **under 10%** were UNEMPLOYED AND SEEKING WORK.

(Of the students surveyed in the FYSS, just under 40% of students were working, 13% were attending college and under 5% were unemployed and seeking work prior to attending Fleming.)

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The purpose of this report is to identify possible indicators and trends of early student withdrawal for further investigation and study. Some factors seem obvious and some not as much. Absolute conclusions cannot be drawn from this work as we have not determined confidence intervals on any of the possible indicators/factors identified at this time - again perhaps that would be a next step for further study.

With that caveat, the study does suggest certain areas of particular interest for further investigation.

Departments/Divisions and projects that influence and affect any of these factors identified above are welcome to contact the Institutional Research Office (IRO) for further discussion of this data and/or for requested assistance in further investigation of these areas (i.e. surveys, focus groups, subject matter expert discussions, etc.). Given that this is a 'summative' piece, certain important details of the data are not spelled out here. Therefore, the IRO is available for further discussion of this data should it be of interest to you.

We have heard from many in the College, that they are looking for this kind of summative report that helps identify trends and red flags, rather than just accessing yearly data in the form of charts and tables. This is the IRO's first attempt at such a summative project. We welcome feedback on improvements that could be made and feedback on if this type of work is helpful to your work. Please also identify any other areas for which you believe a summative analysis would be of interest. Our intention is to take this work and other data, such as the annual student retention study and the First-year student survey to try and combine research work for an even higher level of summative report.