

ADMISSIONS AND RECORDS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME

2010-11

Our mission is to educate students on college policies, procedures, services, and online functions to help them achieve their educational goal(s).

A commitment to student learning is a priority in all interactions that Admissions and Records staff has with students.

Student Learning Outcome: Using email communication, A&R will inform and educate NEW, RETURNING, and CONTINUING students who register online about the THREE-day drop for non-payment policy.

As a result of this communication during spring registration in January, A&R attempted to reduce the number of “dropped for non-payment” students during Spring 2011 registration as compared to Fall 2010 (330) by 50%.

CURRENT DISTRICT POLICY ON DROPS FOR NON-PAYMENT:

*Enrollment fees must be **PAID IN FULL** within three days of your initial registration or your classes will be dropped and released to other students (as displayed on the WebAdvisor Student Menu).*

METHODS: The primary objective of this SLO is to prevent new and returning students from losing their classes because of non-payment. Admissions and Records staff members believe that it is important to initiate alternative strategies with the potential to keep students from losing their classes because they are unaware and uninformed of current policies.

There are three features to this Student Learning Outcome. First, there was a daily email communication sent to students the day after they registered for a minimum of one class section. This email informed students about the drop for nonpayment policy. The Graduation Specialist took the lead on this part of the project and used an email merge to send out the policy reminder. A daily list was provided by the Datatel super user.

Second, the email reminders contained information regarding the drop policy, as well as the student ID and email address. The content of this letter explained the purpose of the email, provided the assessment survey, and gave directions on how to reply and return the evaluation, with comments, to a generic Admissions email address. The content of the emails was minimal to encourage students to reply. The email merges were limited to 300 words or less in each batch to prevent them from being spammed. In addition, there was a link and phone number within the email for the Financial Aid office. Students who receive financial aid prior to registering are not be dropped for nonpayment. All daily lists were saved and stored in a folder (2011 Spring SLO) on the “H” drive for Admissions.

The third feature was a one-minute assessment survey. The purpose of including this instrument in the email communication was to receive a “timely” reply when the student read the letter. This email included a short six-question survey that asked the student about their knowledge of the drop policy

and/or whether this email made them aware of the policy? Survey instructions were provided. The students who chose to respond could hit “reply,” answer the survey questions, then hit “send.” All students who registered online between the dates of January 4-18 received this email letter. There were no replies received after Admissions stopped sending them on January 19th. (See Appendix A--Letter)

Upon receiving the responses, a generic thank you was emailed to the student for their participation in this survey. Any concerns and/or complaints by students were addressed immediately by the Graduation Specialist. (See Appendix B--thank you reply)

Comments from the students were reviewed by all A&R staff and will be used to make future decisions on how to better explain this policy and implement this same email as part of the ongoing registration process. (See Appendix C- Student Comments)

LIMITATIONS: The purpose of this email was to prevent New and Returning students, who may be unaware of this recent policy change, from being dropped for non-payment. Here are the following limitations to this SLO:

The email itself was a limitation. Although 99% of SCC students have email addresses, there is always the limitation that students can choose not to respond—unlike an “in person” survey. The daily replies to this email survey sent out to registered students averaged about 6-10%. Although this is a low response, those who did respond gave value to this assessment.

The Subject Heading was a limitation. It was discovered that the subject line does matter when you send a survey. How you deliver the message makes a difference! The original subject line read “Don’t Lose your SCC Classes.” On January 10th, the subject line was changed to “Drop for Non-Payment Policy” and the survey responses jumped to 13-20% daily.

Another large limitation is the explanation of the 3-day drop for non-payment policy. There is no simple way to explain this policy so that everyone understands how it works and what happens over the weekends. Because of this dilemma, students who received the letter were perplexed by it! They thought they were dropped, when they had not been dropped. That is because the letter included a statement about how the drop policy works on weekends, but this statement only confused the students. It should be excluded when used again.

This email was sent to all students who registered online. The mailing did not distinguish between paid and unpaid students. As a result, some students who had already paid found this email misleading. Future mailings will instruct the student to disregard the email if payment has already been made.

Although the email gave the purpose for this survey, there was no mention of confidentiality and how the results would be used. This information needs to be in the email when the SLO is duplicated for the fall 2011 semester.

The email also did not distinguish between new, returning, and continuing students. Therefore the data was not pure for only new and returning students. Any continuing student who registered for a section during the new student registration timeframe also received this email. Their replies could be identified

as they commented that they had been dropped during last year's registration, so they were already aware of the policy.

Lastly, the internet is not always a perfect world. There are potential glitches that may have prohibited these emails from reaching all of the students on the daily list. Many times a survey responder's internet provider could be experiencing difficulties which prevented a reply.

IMPLEMENTATION of Assessment Process:

Identify who is responsible for doing each step in the evaluation process (list all of the individuals involved in the assessment process)—All full and part-time staff, including the Graduation Specialist, Registrar, and Associate Dean, were responsible for reviewing survey replies and comments. Everyone was required to provide a compilation of results, along with an individual assessment.

Outline the timeline for implementation: The implementation of this SLO began with new/returning student registration on January 4th and continued through new/returning student registration on January 18th. This timeframe was chosen because the greatest number of new students would register during these dates. It was presumed that new and returning students who had not attended SCC or SAC could be unaware of this non-payment drop policy. Also, this timeframe was chosen because 330 students were dropped during a similar registration timeframe during Fall Semester, 2010, registration.

Identify who will be evaluated: The email communication itself is being evaluated. How effective was it? How clearly was it written? Did it convey the planned message to the student? Did it help students pay on time?

Identify who is the intended user of the data that will be collected: This data will be analyzed by the Associate Dean, Registrar, and all staff. A staff meeting discussion will consolidate feedback on how to create a better letter to communicate this policy to students prior to fall semester, 2011.

RESULTS

EMAIL RESULTS: Did the email prevent students from being dropped-- compared to a similar timeframe during new/returning students' registration last fall?

A total of 3284 emails were sent to students who registered between the dates of January 5 – 18th. There were 414 replies, or 13% of the students responded to the survey within those same dates. In researching statistical returns from emails, 40% is considered to be an average return. This 13% return was below the anticipated average of 40%. However, the 414 replies provided a large enough sample to be able to assess the effectiveness of the email communication.

During new student registration prior to Fall 2010, there were 4755 sections registered with 331 sections dropped for non-payment, or a 7% drop for non-payment during the dates of August 5 – August 18, 2010. During the new student registration dates of January 5 – 18 prior to Spring 2011, and using the reminder email, the percentage of drops for non-payments went down to 2.7% with only 97 sections

dropped from 3612 registered sections. The conclusion is that the email was effective in lowering the number of sections that were dropped for non-payment compared to a prior term.

The greatest responses 339 (82%) and 332 (80%) were to questions #1 and 6, respectively. 82% of the students replied that it was a good idea to contact new students about the “drop for non-payment” policy. 80% of the replies also said Yes to question #6 -“Were you aware of the drop for non-payment policy? This was a surprising result to this survey, and was skewed by continuing students who may have registered during the same timeframe.

Question #3 (If you have not already paid, will you pay immediately after this email?) was answered the least number of times, with 120 replies of yes and 28 replies of no. There were 55 students who chose not to reply to this question, although they had answered all of the other questions in the survey. The good news is that 59% of the students who did reply to this question said that they would pay immediately after answering this email.

WERE NEW/RETURNING AWARE OF THIS DROP POLICY? Question #1 specifically asked, “Were you aware of this 3-day drop policy?” There were 332 “yes” replies vs. 67 “no” replies. There were 80% of the students who responded to the survey that were aware of the drop policy and 16% that were unaware. There were 4% of the respondents who did not attempt to answer this question. These results provide some level of confidence that many students are aware of this policy when they register.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EMAIL: To understand the effect of the email reminding students about the drop for non-payment policy, the data indicated a distinct lowering of section drops compared to the same timeframe during a prior term.

The Graduation Specialist was in charge of doing the email merges. She changed the subject line of the email from “Don’t lose your SCC Classes” to “Drop for Non-payment Policy” with notable results. The average response from students with the “don’t lose your SCC Classes” subject line was 10%. The morning after the subject line was changed to “Drop for Non-payment Policy” the response from students jumped to 20%. Finding: the subject line does matter when you send a survey via email!

Although students chose not to respond to the survey, the numbers indicate that an email informing the students of the drop policy did influence students to pay their enrollment fees in a timely manner. In addition, while one can say that the email was effective, student comments made it clear that the email was also confusing to them (especially to those who had already paid for their classes immediately). The email needs improvement!

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUTCOME: As expected, the results indicated that this email reminder is an effective tool for enrollment management.

- Since the emails were effective in preventing drops, it is recommended that this procedure become standardized for both colleges whenever students register for a class. This proposal will be pursued during the monthly Datatel meetings

Comments: "I really commend the school for being this upfront about payment and the getting the word out to both returning and new students. Thank you SCC"

"I think this a good idea to contact students because last year my classes were dropped because of non-payment and I wasn't aware until it was too late."

"This is a good idea to inform us newbees. Thanks"

- The email was not clear, so there is a need to re-write the reminder. There needs to be a disclaimer that this email is intended only for those students who did not pay their fees immediately. Here are some student comments that address the confusion within the email-----

"I already paid and my account shows a credit of \$76, so this just confused me. I wondered if I have paid or what!?"

"No, please explain. I am on a fee waiver"

"I should be paid up for this class, I have included a receipt, Please let me know if there is anything else I need to do."

"I was not aware of this. I was on the wait list for some of my classes, so how would that work?"

"I was aware and I did pay when I registered. Is there a problem? Was I dropped?"

"I wish you would have sent this well before now. I had all of my classes dropped, but yet you still showed a balance due for those classes. That balance was paid and I assumed once paid you would reinstate the classes."

"In the future, give examples, such as "Enroll on Friday, and pay by Sunday"

- The issue of Veterans needs to be discussed by both colleges. Should veterans be exempt from being dropped for non-payment within three days?
- This SLO needs to be repeated for the fall semester—with email improvements.

IDENTIFY WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCE THAT LED TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS: All full time Admissions and Records staff participated in the analysis and collection of data results. These staff also provided comments and recommendations after a staff meeting where SLO results were discussed openly.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS (INCLUDING EVALUATION METHOD): Staff read student comments and felt that the students did not mind the 3-day pay or get dropped policy. However, they agreed that using the email reminder and placing the 3-day policy in Web Advisor would be beneficial for all students who register prior to the semester start.

IDENTIFY WHEN THE OUTCOME WILL BE EVALUATED AGAIN: During the month of August, 2011.

APPENDIX A – COPY OF THE EMAIL LETTER AND SURVEY SEND TO STUDENTS

APPENDIX B – GENERIC THANK YOU REPLY

APPENDIX C – STUDENT COMMENTS (separate by positive and negative- lump the positive together, etc).