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**REVIEW OF FALL 2013 NON-REGISTERED STUDENTS**

DATA

DISCUSSION

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Submitted to President Bill Destler and Provost Jeremy Haefner

By the

Enrollment and Registration Dashboard Taskforce

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## **Enrollment and Registration Taskforce: Membership**

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**The charge of the Enrollment and Registration Dashboard Taskforce was to: 1) investigate the characteristics of the non-registering students and determine any causes for their lack of registration; and 2) develop executive-level dashboards that track student registrations and provide intelligence as to the impact that our outreach to students is having on our enrollments.**

**This report addresses the first charge of the Taskforce and includes data analysis, discussion and preliminary recommendations.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

There does not appear to be one silver bullet to explain or answer the question: "Why the Drop in fall 2013 Undergraduate Registrations? Analysis does uncover some interesting factors and conditions that help provide partial answers to this question.

An important prelude to these data and findings is an understanding of certain "pre-existing" limitations:

- A. The analysis is confounded by the lack of comparison data for certain data elements for the same point in time last year. Cohort retention numbers, which we used to the degree possible, did provide such comparison data. Many times, however, we were left with no historical data to review.
- B. It is impossible to know with certainty whether the market (i.e., potential students and active students) reacted to calendar conversion in a way that resulted in deferred registration, expedited graduation, or delayed re-enrollment. Some task force members pointed to anecdotal information that suggested this was the case.

In some sense, therefore, this report raises more questions than it can answer. But, at the same time, it provides some important data to help illustrate where we missed the mark for fall 2013 registrations

One important conclusion that should be kept in mind is that when one puts all of the factors together collectively, it is pretty clear that fall 2013 registration numbers may actually be higher than one would have predicted given what we know now about the fall 2013 pre-registration starting point.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The major takeaways from this analysis include:

### **Informing Condition #1: Fall 2013 Pre-Registration Starting Point**

- Spring 2013 undergraduate enrollment was lower than spring 2012 enrollment.<sup>1</sup> This represented a decline of 2.5% and resulted in a decrease of 296 Headcount (128 of these students were in a Xerox sponsored diploma program that was cancelled).
- For winter 2012, spring 2013 and summer 2013 there was a decline in off-term enrollments of new students. This equates to a decrease of 246 undergraduate and 32 graduate students.
- The completion of a Xerox sponsored degree program in the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies also accounted for the loss of about 50 undergraduate students when comparing fall 2013 to fall 2012.

### **Informing Condition #2: Upper level students (year levels 4 and 5)**

- Students in year levels 4 and 5 were over-represented<sup>2</sup> in the population of non-registered students, especially within certain colleges.
- The fall 2008, 2009 and 2010 freshman cohorts experienced an increased loss of retention between last year and this year. The loss in retention for each of these cohorts is the largest we have seen going back to the cohort of fall 2004 for the same time intervals. The increased loss among these cohorts equates to about 75 students. It should also be noted that the retention between the third and fourth year has steadily declined each of the last five years.

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<sup>1</sup> International locations and non-matriculated (non-degree students) were excluded because these segments have a smaller impact on the budget.

<sup>2</sup> When considering the distribution of the enrolled students and that of non-enrolled students, a sub-population is said to be over-represented if there exists an observationally higher concentration (expressed as a percentage in the committee's report) in the non-enrolled, as compared with those that are enrolled.

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## **Informing Condition #3: Freshman first year persistence rate**

- The first year freshman persistence rate (2012 cohort) declined from 89% to approximately 87%, which translates to approximately 50 fewer students returning in fall 2013.

## **Informing Condition #4: Number of degree certifications**

- There was an increase in the number of degree certifications over a year ago, particularly in summer certifications. More degrees were awarded in summer 2013 (88 undergraduate, 81 graduate) compared to summer 2012. For the entire year this equaled an increase of about 50 undergraduate students.

## **Impact on Bottom-line**

A rough estimate of how these four conditions influenced the drop in fall 2013 Undergraduate Registration suggests the following:

• Off-Term Entry Decline	246
• Non-renewal of Xerox Contract	50
• First Year Retention Decline	50
• 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> year retention of cohorts 2008-2010	75
• Increase in Degree Completions	50
Total =	471 Students

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## DATA AND DISCUSSION

The remainder of the report extends and expands upon the four conditions described in the executive summary and provides further information related to particular characteristics of non-registered students.

Exhibits follow the report and provide tables and further “drill-down” information.

We begin by comparing Fall Registration Results from 2013 to 2012.

## FALL 2013 REGISTRATION RESULTS COMPARED TO FALL 2012 REGISTRATION

### Undergraduate:<sup>3</sup>

Fall 2013 Undergraduate headcount and FTE declined by 2.7% (headcount -348 and FTE -316(-2.7%) compared to fall 2012.

Breaking this down further, we see that:

- The largest percent declines in headcount were with CMS (-26.6% - Xerox program loss, mostly), COS (-9.5%), CLA, (- 8.6%), NTID (-8.5%), and SCB (-5.9%). (See Exhibit #1a.)
- Only KGCOE (+5.3%) had a significant increase. (See Exhibit #1a.)

### Graduate:<sup>3</sup>

Fall 2013 Graduate headcount increased 2% and FTE increased by 3.5% (Headcount +55 and FTE +64.3) compared to fall 2012.

Breaking this down further we see that:

- The largest percent increases in headcount were with GIS (+30.2%), KGCOE (+20.3%), GCCIS (+12.2%), and CMS (+8.3%). (See Exhibit #1b.)
- The largest percent declines in headcount were with CLA (-19.8%), SCB (-19.1%), NTID (-14.3%), CAST (-12.0%), and CHST (-11.4%). (See Exhibit #1b.)

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<sup>3</sup> International locations and non-matriculated (non-degree) students were excluded because those segments have a smaller impact on the budget.

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## EARLY CONCERNS ABOUT ENROLLMENT

It is important to recognize that undergraduate enrollment declines began in the spring 2013 term. These losses were not regained and contribute to the drop in fall 2013 semester registration of continuing students as follows:

### Spring 2013 Results Compared to spring 2012

- Undergraduate headcount for spring term 2013 declined by 2.5% (Headcount - 296) compared to spring 2012.<sup>4</sup> (See Exhibit #2.)
- The largest percent declines in headcount were with CMS (-34.3%, Xerox
  - program loss, mostly),  
CLA (-10.00%) NTID (-6.3%), SCB (-6.1%), COS (-4.4%). (See Exhibit #2)
  - KGCOE (+6.3%) and GCCIS (+3.5%) had increases. (See Exhibit #2.)

Comparing declines in spring 2013 registration by college to where largest declines occurred in fall 2013 registrations shows that CMS, CLA, NTID, SCB and COS began to experience a decline in spring registrations, which carried over to fall. The Taskforce was able to determine causes for decline in some instances (i.e., Xerox contract and retention.)

- Off term entry of new students in 2012-2013 declined considerably. Compared with the previous year, the number of new students starting in quarters other than fall ("off-term") declined with 32 fewer new graduate students and 246 fewer new undergraduate students entering in terms other than fall.

The semester calendar "may" continue to present challenges in achieving off-term enrollment goals and this is an issue that deserves further examination.

- The freshman cohort (2012) persistence rate declined by over 2 percentage points compared to the fall 2011 cohort at the same point in time, which is between the first fall and spring quarter. (See Exhibit #3.). This decline represents a loss of 50 additional students.

### Lag in Fall 2013 registrations

Pre-registration for fall semester 2013 began in April 2013. The numbers of returning students registering for fall 2013, however, lagged behind the previous year's returning students at the same relative point in time.

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<sup>4</sup> International locations and non-matriculated (non-degree) students were excluded because these segments have a smaller impact on the budget.

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Consistent with the process followed for the last few years, colleges began a concerted effort to contact non-registered students to determine the status of their return for fall. With heightened concern about what we were seeing in the registration numbers, the outreach efforts were reinforced with a more formal reporting process. Colleges were asked to report on a monthly basis to the Institute Advising Office on the status of all students who remained non-registered. (See Exhibit #4.)

Despite this aggressive tracking and outreach process which extended over the spring and summer, comparison data continued to show that the number of returning undergraduates had declined and lagged behind the previous year by 250-300 students.

### Degrees Awarded

The semester conversion schools that RIT benchmarked against indicated that their enrollment numbers declined in the first semester of calendar conversion. One theory behind these declines was that some students accelerated the completion of degree requirements in order to graduate prior to the conversion to semesters.

For RIT, the combined number of students earning degrees for fall, winter and spring quarters this past year actually declined by 36 for undergraduates, while for graduate students there were 19 more earning degrees.

Interestingly, however, with the completion of certifications for summer 2013, the picture has changed considerably. As of October 15, 2013, we awarded degrees to 88 more undergraduates and 81 more graduate students in summer 2013 as compared to summer 2012. For the full year the net result is that we awarded 152 more degrees compared to last year -- 52 more undergraduate degrees and 100 more graduate degrees. (See Exhibit #5.)

### **PROFILE OF NON-RETURNING STUDENTS**

Of particular interest in this analysis are the characteristics of non-registered students and any known reasons for their failure to register. In order to develop this student profile, we first isolated the cohort of non-registered students that were eligible to register. Eligible to register means that the student was not expected to graduate in either spring or summer and was not in a suspension status.

As outlined in (*Exhibit #6*), there were 981 undergraduates and 401 graduate students in this particular cohort.

The profile includes:

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- A breakdown of undergraduate versus graduate, by year (senior, junior, etc.), and by program
- Answering additional questions regarding this population of non-registrants including:
  - How many credits have they earned and how many do they need to finish their degree?
  - How many financial holds and what are the ranges of the holds?
  - How many need co-ops (and how many co-ops do they need) to finish?

It is important to remember that this analysis is focused on the non-returning, main campus degree-seeking students that were eligible to register.

## Results for Undergraduate Students (N=981)

Specific Colleges are Over-Represented<sup>5</sup> and Under-Represented<sup>5</sup> in Non-Registered Student Pool

- Among undergraduate non-registered students, students from CLA, CMS, NTID, and SCB are over-represented. GCCIS has the largest number of non-registered students. (See *Exhibit #7.*)
- Among undergraduate non-registered students, students from CIAS and KGCOE are under-represented. (See *Exhibit #7*)

Because there is no historical data on over and under representations, it is not clear whether these percentages represent a shift from the past. This needs to be tracked moving forward.

## Student Year Level Makes a Difference

- When reviewed by year-level, students in year levels 4 and 5 are over-represented<sup>5</sup> in the distribution of undergraduate non-registered students. (See *Exhibit #8.*)
- For every college (except NTID), the last year-level has the largest number of non-registered students. (See *Exhibit #9a.*)

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<sup>5</sup> When considering the distribution of the enrolled students, a sub-population is said to be over-represented if there exists an observationally higher concentration (expressed as a percentage in the committee's report) in the non-enrolled, as compared to those that are enrolled.

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- The fall 2008, 2009 and 2010 freshman cohorts experienced an increased loss of retention between last year and this year. The loss in retention for each of these cohorts is the largest we have seen going back to the cohort of fall 2004 for the same time intervals. The increased loss among these cohorts equates to about 75 students. It should also be noted that the retention between the third and fourth year has steadily declined each of the last five years as well. (See *Exhibit #9b.*)

The retention of year 4 and 5 students deserves further study. Emphasis to date has been on supporting first to second year retention. However, these findings suggest that we are losing students in the later years at an increasing rate and this works against RIT's Student Success objectives.

### Majority of Non-Registered Students in Good Academic Standing

- 68% of the non-registered undergraduate group has a GPA of 2.5+ and 36% with GPA of 3.0+. (See *Exhibit #10.*)
- This finding clarifies that non-registrants, by and large, are not in academic trouble.

### Ethnicity Slightly Over-Represented

- AALANA students are slightly over-represented in the undergraduate non-registered group. (See *Exhibit #11.*)

Due to lack of historical data, we do not know if this distribution signals a shift or any significant changes. Because of this it is difficult to draw conclusions.

### Financial Holds Evenly Divided Across Student Year Level

- 22.5% of the non-registered undergraduates have a financial hold preventing them from registering. By year-level, year-level 1 (26.6%), year-level 4 (24.3%) and year-level 2 (21.7%), have the highest percentage of non-registered students with holds. (See *Exhibit #12.*)

Due to lack of historical data, we do not know if this distribution signals a shift or any significant changes. Because of this it is difficult to draw conclusions.

### Three Colleges with Highest Percentage of Financial Holds

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- Looking at financial holds by college, the colleges with the highest percentage of non-registered students with holds are: NTID (37.3%), CLA (27.9%), and CAST (24%). (See Exhibit #13.)

Due to lack of historical data, we do not know if this distribution signals a shift or any significant changes. Because of this it is difficult to draw conclusions.

### Degree Requirements Remaining Indicate Pattern

Investigation around how many courses and co-ops remain for 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> year non-registered undergraduate students (NTID 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> year students) revealed some interesting information. These data were collected from the colleges as a result of their outreach to the original cohort ("outreach group) of non-registered students (See Exhibit #14). The collection of this information permits us to cross-tabulate the responses to how many courses remain and how many co-ops remain. The details of this cross-tabulation can be found in (See Exhibit #15.) Data show:

- Among year-level 5 students, **24% are extremely close to graduating** (one term or less of course work remaining and one or fewer co-ops remaining.) This represents 16 out of 67 students.
- Of those remaining year-level 5 students for whom information is known:
  - 33% (23 students) have 5 or more courses to complete and 50% of this same group has more than 1 co-op remaining.
  - 13% (9 students) have less than 1 term of coursework remaining plus 2 or more co-op requirements outstanding.
- Among year-level 4 students, **27% are extremely close to graduating** (one term or less of course work remaining and one or fewer co-ops remaining.) This represents 42 out of 158 students.
- Of those remaining year-level 4 students for whom information is known:
  - 41% (65 students) have 5 or more courses to complete and 20% of this same group has more than 1 co-op remaining
  - 3% (4 students) have less than one term of coursework remaining plus 2 or more co-op requirements outstanding.

These findings call into question what actions and support are needed to ensure that students who are extremely close to graduation complete their degrees.

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## Results for Graduate Students (N=401)

### Specific Colleges Over-Represented<sup>6</sup> and Under-Represented<sup>7</sup> in Non-Registered Student Pool

- Among graduate non-registered students, students from CAST, CMS, and GCCIS are over-represented. GCCIS has the largest number of non-registered students. (See Exhibit #16.)
- Among graduate non-registered students, students from CIAS, KGCOE and SCB are under-represented. (See Exhibit #16.)

### Majority of Non-Registered Students are in Good Academic Standing

- 85% of the non-registered graduate group has a GPA of 3.0+. (See Exhibit #17.)

AALANA and International students are slightly under-represented<sup>6</sup>. (See Exhibit #18.)

Again because there is no historical data on over and under representation, it is not clear whether these percentages represent a shift from the past. This needs to be tracked moving forward.

## **Making Meaning of the Characteristics of the Non-Registered Student Cohort**

The Taskforce was asked to identify the defining characteristics of the non-registered cohort. These characteristics, while interesting, provide a picture of who did not register but for the most part, do not answer the underlying question of “Why” these students did not register.

In the next section of the report we offer some suggestions for ways in which the “Why” question might be furthered answered.

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<sup>6</sup> When considering the distribution of the enrolled students, a sub-population is said to be over-represented if there exists an observationally higher concentration (expressed as a percentage in the committee’s report) in the non-enrolled, as compared to those that are enrolled.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD**

The value of this analysis would be incomplete if the Taskforce did not ask itself what further information or targeted action might help avoid further decline in student registrations. We offer the following for consideration:

### **1. Spring 2014 Enrollment Outreach**

Immediate attention must be placed on currently enrolled students who fail to pre-register for the spring (2014) term.

Fortunately, plans are in place to address this need. When the "open enrollment" registration period for spring semester begins, the Institute Advising Office (IAO) and the Office of the Registrar will identify all active, degree-seeking UG and BS/MS students who have been registered spring 2123 or later and have not yet registered for spring semester 2135. This information will be provided to the colleges for outreach and tracking. Colleges will report back once per month until add/drop period is over. The goal is to move unregistered students to registration.

This outreach process must be continuous and repeated each term moving forward. The outreach will be assisted significantly by the development of a registration dashboard which is part of this Taskforce's second charge.

### **2. Outreach to Students Close to Graduation**

A cohort of students identified in this analysis submitted an application for graduation for spring 2123 and/or summer 2134 but have yet to be certified for graduation. This group deserves immediate outreach in order to understand what is holding up degree certification.

Again, fortunately, this outreach has begun. The Institute Advising Office (IAO) and the Office of the Registrar are presently working with the colleges on this effort. Advisors will reach out and provide information back to the IAO on the status of each student by mid-November. The goals are to understand why the

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students are not yet certified, facilitate enrollment if needed, and help move them to certification as soon as feasible.

### **3. Retention of upper class students**

Data related to the retention of upper class students suggest that we are losing students in the later years at rising rates. The Student Success Steering Committee should be tasked to review this issue in more depth and recommend strategies to help reverse this trend.

In addition, as mentioned in the body of the report, some colleges were identified as having a higher proportion of non-registered students. Unfortunately, there is no historical data to affirm or disaffirm whether these percentages are unusual or significant. Because of this, we should track this moving forward.

### **4. Off Term Entry Opportunities and Process**

The number of off-term entry students declined considerably. This phenomenon requires further investigation in order to determine if it is an anomaly.

The Task Force recommends that examination of factors affecting off-term entry be conducted against the backdrop of the following question: Does the switch to a semester based curriculum and semester calendar affect the ability of students (transfer students and graduate students) to begin their enrollment at RIT during the off term. Aspects of this question that should be answered include: is it possible for a student to enter off term, take a full load and complete an undergraduate or graduate program in the same time expected for completing degree requirements were the student to start "on" term? If the answer is no, what steps are needed to promote off term enrollment across the University's degree programs?

### **5. Promoting On-time Graduation Culture**

Many higher education institutions have implemented a campaign to emphasize and support student completion of degree. Some institutions refer to this as an *"in the door and out in 4"* commitment, making continuous enrollment a visible expectation for students. This has not been emphasized at RIT, although recent policy changes have been implemented that support this expectation. For example, the revised voluntary Leave of Absence (LOA) policy places increased focus on student communication regarding time away from the university,

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stronger communication between the student and the department before and during the LOA, and potential for collaborative planning regarding their return. As a component of implementation, advisors will communicate to students that they should submit a request for LOA if they do not plan to maintain continuous course or co-op enrollment in any upcoming term.

The revised LOA policy, new academic advising model, implementation of degree audit and the ongoing process for outreach to non-registered students present building blocks toward more intentional focus and communication to students regarding our expectation and desire for timely degree completion.

It is recommended that the Student Success Steering Committee pursue this topic and assess whether other strategies may be needed to reduce the number of undocumented "stop outs" and how to promote this culture change.

## **6. Degree Application Procedure**

Further investigation is warranted to determine whether the degree application procedure needs greater coordination and follow through at the program/college level. The finding that a large number of students, who submitted degree applications have not been certified, leave questions lingering in the minds of this Taskforce.

Fortunately, plans are in place to address this issue. The Office of the Registrar has already implemented new structures to take affect this semester that require colleges to review their students earlier for precertification. These new processes require colleges to pre-certify students prior to the completion of the term for which students have applied to graduate. If the student is not projected to complete all requirements within the term, then the degree application must be moved out to the appropriate completion term. This will significantly reduce the number of degree applicants that are simply "bumped" at the end of the certification cycle without pre-certification review.

## **7. Future Enrollment Projections**

The conversion to semesters has changed the dynamics around using historic data (quarter based data) as a basis for comparison and prediction. This is particularly true as applied to enrollment patterns and predictions for new and returning students. As a result, future enrollment projections may require additional support

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and review from those not previously involved in the process and may require revised assumptions about retention rates, conversion rates and new student starts—all of which affect budget projections.