**Low GPA Analysis**

Changes in academic probation policies may have resulted in an increase in retention to the second year rates without a significant change in persistence to the third year. Figure 1 shows retention and third year persistence rates for first-time full-time freshmen for the most recent nine cohorts.

In addition to looking at overall retention and persistence rates, OIRP looked at the fall 2011 and fall 2012 cohorts in greater detail. The findings for both cohorts were almost identical. Students who returned for the second year after completing the first year and attending both semesters with first semester and first year cumulative GPAs of 1.75 or better returned for the fourth semester at a better than 90% rate. Students who returned for the second year after having first semester and first year cumulative GPAs below 1.75 returned for the fourth semester at only about 30% rate. The most recent data for the two cohorts show a better than 70% graduation or continuation rate for those returning for the second year after a first year without GPA problems while less than 20% of those who had first semester and first year cumulative GPAs below 1.75 but who continued to the second year were active. Details on the two cohorts follow.

Fall 2011 Cohort

In fall 2011, UMass Boston enrolled 1,247 new first-time full-time freshmen. Of these, 98 did not return for spring 2012. Ten of the students have no grade records. Of the 88 others, 33 had GPAs of 0 and 19 others had GPAs below 1.75.

Of the 1,149 who returned for spring 2013, 133 returned with GPAs below 1.75 including 39 who returned with GPAs of 0. These may have been students who withdrew from all courses prior to the course withdrawal deadline and chose to simply start over in the second semester. Of the 133, 78 (58.7%) completed the spring semester with cumulative GPAs of less than 1.75. Conversely, among the 1,016 who started the spring with 1.75 GPA or better, only 23 (2.3%) completed the spring with cumulative GPAs below 1.75. Overall, 101 students who were active in spring 2012 completed the semester with cumulative GPAs below 1.75.

Of the original 1,247 freshmen, 983 (78.8%) returned for fall 2013. This included 14 students who were not active in spring 2012, 2 of whom had 0 GPAs. There were 54 students who had been active in spring 2012 who had overall GPAs of less than 1.75 at the end of the spring semester. Of these, 43 had GPAs of less than 1.75 for the fall 2012 semester as well as less than 1.75 overall. Of that 43, only 13 (30.2%) would be active in spring 2013, the fourth semester. Eleven other students who had been above 1.75 for the fall 2011 semester fell to an overall GPA below 1.75 for the year as a whole, but returned in fall 2012.

If the 54 who attended fall 2011 and spring 2012 and finished with an overall GPA below 1.75 were excluded from enrolling in fall 2012, our retention rate would have been 74.5%. If only the 43 who attended fall 2011 and spring 2012 and had first semester and cumulative GPAs below 1.75 were excluded, our retention rate would have been 75.4%.

Of the 923 students who finished the first year with cumulative GPAs of 1.75 or better and were active in fall 2012, 839 (90.9%) returned for the fourth semester. Of the 58 who completed both semesters of the first year with cumulative GPAs below 1.75 but returned for the second year only 15 (25.9%) would return for spring 2013. Of the 43 who attended fall 2011 and spring 2012 and had first semester and overall GPAs below 1.75 and returned for the second year only 13 (30.2%) would continue to spring 2013.

Of the 923 students who finished the first year with cumulative GPAs of 1.75 or better and were active in fall 2012, 708 (76.7%) had graduated by or were active in fall 2014. Of the 54 who completed the both semesters of the first year with cumulative GPAs below 1.75 but returned for the second year only 11 (19.0%) would graduate by or return for fall 2014. Of the 43 who attended fall 2011 and spring 2012 and had first semester and cumulative GPAs below 1.75 only 8 (18.6%) would graduate by or return for fall 2014.

Fall 2012 Cohort

In fall 2012, UMass Boston enrolled 1,172 new first-time full-time freshmen. Of these, 87 did not return for spring 2013. Three of the students appear to have been retroactively withdrawn after the end of add/drop because they have no grade records. Of the 84 others, 25 had GPAs of 0 and 13 others had GPAs below 1.75.

Of the 1,085 who returned for spring 2013, 117 returned with GPAs below 1.75 including 26 who returned with GPAs of 0. These may have been students who withdrew from all courses prior to the course withdrawal deadline and chose to simply start over in the second semester. Of the 117, 64 (54.7%) completed the spring semester with overall GPAs of less than 1.75. Conversely, among the 968 who started the spring with 1.75 GPA or better, only 22 (2.3%) completed the spring with overall GPAs below 1.75. Overall, 86 students who were active in spring 2013 completed the semester with overall GPAs below 1.75.

Of the original 1,172 freshmen, 908 (77.5%) returned for fall 2013. This included 5 students who were not active in spring 2013, 3 of whom had 0 GPAs. There were 47 students who had been active in spring 2013 who had overall GPAs of less than 1.75 at the end of the spring semester. Of these, 32 had GPAs of less than 1.75 for the fall 2012 semester as well as less than 1.75 overall. Of that 32, only 8 (25%) would be active in spring 2014, the fourth semester. Fifteen other students who had been above 1.75 for the fall 2012 semester fell to an overall GPA below 1.75 for the year as a whole, but returned in fall 2013.

If the 47 who attended fall 2012 and spring 2013 and finished with an overall GPA below 1.75 were excluded from enrolling in fall 2013, our retention rate would have been 73.5%. If only the 32 who attended fall 2012 and spring 2013 and had first semester and overall GPAs below 1.75 were excluded our retention rate would have been 74.7%.

Of the 858 students who finished the first year with cumulative GPAs of 1.75 or better and were active in fall 2013, 777 (90.6%) returned for the fourth semester. Of the 47 who completed both semesters of the first year with GPAs below 1.75 but returned for the second year, only 14 (29.8%) would return for spring 2014. Of the 32 who attended fall 2012 and spring 2013 and had first semester and overall GPAs below 1.75 only 8 (25%) would continue to spring 2014.

Of the 858 students who finished the first year with cumulative GPAs of 1.75 or better and were active in fall 2013, 664 (77.4%) were active in spring 2015. Of the 47 who completed both semesters of the first year with cumulative GPAs below 1.75 but returned for the second year only 9 (19.2%) would return for spring 2014. Of the 32 who attended fall 2012 and spring 2013 and had first semester and overall GPAs below 1.75 but had returned for the second year, only 6 (18.8%) would be active in spring 2015.

Conclusion

If UMass Boston changed its policy to exclude students who completed the first year with less than a 1.75 GPA, it would reduce our retention rate by 3 to 4 percentage points depending on how the policy was structured. Graduation rates are unlikely to be significantly affected.