A STUDY OF DROPOUTS IN THE 1960-61 FRESHMAN CLASS OF MONTANA STATE COLLEGE

By

JOHN J. HAMILTON

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Only 39.5 percent of the students who enroll in colleges in the United States graduate from the institution of original registration in the normal progression--that is, in a four-year period. From the study made by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare of college dropouts for the years 1950-55,[1] the conclusion was reached that nearly 60 percent of the students in the study eventually graduated from some institution of higher education. This conclusion says that approximately 40 percent of the students who enroll in colleges in the United States never graduate.

Since the percentage of dropouts is so high in the United States it is right to ask regarding Montana State College: (1) How many students who enroll in Montana State College withdraw? (2) Why do students drop out of Montana State College? and (3) What type of students are these dropouts?

The Problem

There were 204 of the 1,020 freshmen enrolled in MSC for the year 1960-61 who dropped out of school during the fall, winter, or spring quarter. The specific problem of this paper is to try to determine what type of student withdrew and what were the causes for withdrawing.

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[1] Iffert, Robert, "Retention and Withdrawal of College Students," U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Bulletin 1958, No. 1.

This study was made for a three-fold purpose. The first was to compile all significant data possible about these 204 dropouts as to:

1. The size of high schools they attended
2. Their rank in their high school graduation classes
3. The curriculum in which they enrolled in MSC
4. The scores they made on the predictive aptitude tests at the beginning of their freshman year, September, 1960
5. The grade point average (GPA) they attained (if any) during the part of their freshman year they were enrolled in MSC
6. The date they dropped out of school

The second purpose was to examine the relationships between the dropouts and the six items listed in the first purpose. The third purpose was to try to reach conclusions as to what type of student is dropping out of MSC and to discover what are the major causes for these dropouts.

The Procedures

In order to find all relevant data concerning dropouts in the 1960-61 freshman class of MSC and the causes for these dropouts, the following procedures were used:

1. A review of current literature was made to find the percent of dropouts in other colleges and the causes of these dropouts.

2. In the freshman placement test scores and indices booklet for September, 1960, printed by the MSC testing and counseling service, the dropouts were indicated as recorded in the MSC registrar's office.

3. The six things concerning dropouts listed under the discussion of the problem were compiled in usable tables in order to analyze the data.

4. Analyses were made of the health, marital, dissatisfaction, academic, financial, and other reasons given for dropping out.

5. A questionnaire was sent to the 204 dropouts of the freshman class of 1960-61 to ascertain the cause of their withdrawal, whether or not they were pursuing their education elsewhere, or if they had plans to further their education later, and their reason for enrolling in MSC.

These data seemed particularly pertinent if MSC were going to try to retain all students who should continue in college until graduation.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the dropouts whose names are listed in the book of freshmen who in September, 1960, took the college entrance examinations at Montana State College. No effort was made to include the 180 more who were listed as freshmen for this year, 1960-61, but had been enrolled in MSC or some other college previous to September, 1960. Nor did this study include the students who enrolled as freshmen for the winter or spring quarters of 1961.

Furthermore, this study was limited to the one school year, 1960-61, fall, winter, and spring quarters. This limitation will be removed only if others will continue the study of this class for the next four years to gain similar information at MSC to that which was obtained by the five year study made by the U. S. Department of Education under the direction of Robert Iffert.

The Iffert study was limited to the United States students. For the MSC study there was no particular reason for not including both United States and foreign students.

Definition of Terms

In order to aid the reader in understanding frequently used terms in this paper that might be confusing, a list of these terms and their definitions is provided.

Dropout is any student who has withdrawn from college after enrolling but before graduating.

Withdrawal is used interchangeably with dropout.

GPA is the abbreviation used for Grade Point Average. This is the five point system of grading that is used at Montana State College: 3.50 and above-"A", 2.50-3.50-"B", 1.50-2.49-"C", .50-149-"D", and .49 and below-"F".

MSC will be used for Montana State College because of the many times that referral is made to the school in this paper.

Freshman class will refer to the 1,020 first-quarter students who took the entrance examinations in September, 1960, and are listed by the Montana State College Placement test scores and indices booklet.

The seriousness of the problem of dropouts as revealed in a study of literature will be presented in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to have a basis for comparison of the dropout problem at Montana State College with the same problem at other institutions of higher learning in the United States, it was necessary to make a review of literature on college dropouts.

Guide Lines published a selected list of references designated "School Retention" in its issue for July, 1958 (reprinted, September, 1958).[1] This list served as the chief source of literature references for this paper pertaining to the dropout problem in the United States.

The fact that 178 articles from various journals are listed in this booklet just from the 1950's alone indicates that many are aware of the problem of dropouts and are engaged in the attempt to solve this problem. This is not an exhaustive list, nor does it include any references to the many books that have recently been published which contain discussion of the dropout problem.

The Immensity of the Problem of College Dropouts

American colleges and universities are presently faced with the costly and distressing problem of having about half of their entering freshmen withdraw before graduation.[2] This has been clearly brought out

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[1] Weary, Bettina, "School Retention: Selected List of References," Guide Lines, July, 1958 (Reprinted, September, 1958).

[2] Schuman, R. Baird, "College Dropouts: An Overview," The Journal of Educational Sociology, 29:374, April, 1956.

by MacIntosh who stated, "Approximately 50 percent of college and university freshmen do not graduate from the institution they entered."[3] Long and Perry,[4] in a study of 25 colleges, reported that of those entering, from 26.9 percent to 62.5 percent did not graduate from any college four years later.

A study of two separate universities revealed that at the University of Wisconsin, of those entering in the class of 1948, 26.3 percent actually graduated in the class of 1948, while at the University of Indiana, of those entering in the classes of 1951 and 1952, 29.9 percent had graduated by January 1, 1953.[5] Both of these universities are similar to MSC in that they are state supported and their entrance policies are more lenient than those of the average private institution. In another study of the University of Wisconsin it was found that for 1,994 persons who entered as new freshmen in September, 1948, the first year of entrance was associated with the greatest loss in registration.[6] Of these 1,994 freshmen, 15 percent failed to register the second semester of the year of entrance, 35 percent did not return for the second year, and less than half of the original group were registered in the eighth semester after entrance.

That there are extreme differences in dropouts of various colleges was shown in Schuman's study which stated, "In some schools

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[3]MacIntosh, Archibald, Behind the Academic Curtain, p. 68.

[4]Long, Louis, and Perry, J. D., "Mortality Study of College Students," School and Society, 77:105, February 14, 1953.

[5]Whittemore, Irving C., "Does a Military Interruption Decrease the Chances of Obtaining a Degree?" School and Society, 78:27, July, 1953.

[6]Schuman, R. B., op. cit., p. 347.

studied, only nine percent had graduated after four years, while in others as many as 62 percent had graduated."[7]

Dropouts have been a problem of long standing in the United States as was shown by McNeely's study[8] during the 1930's when he found that out of every 1,000 students who entered publicly controlled colleges, 487 students, or 48.7 percent, withdrew from the institutions of higher education represented in the investigation prior to completing the requirements for graduation.

The largest study of dropouts ever to be conducted in the United States was the one done by Iffert which revealed that of the fulltime students who enrolled in publicly controlled four-year institutions in the fall of 1950, 32.5 percent graduated in 1954 or before. The corresponding percentage for privately controlled institutions was 56.6 percent.[9]

Iffert points out, in the following statement, that the freshman year is the critical period for dropouts when over one-fourth withdrew:

> Of the half-million freshmen who started to college in the fall of 1950, eleven percent did not attend the institution of first registration more than one semester, term or quarter. More than one-fourth (27.6 percent) were casualities by the end of the first school year. The most critical period is clearly the second half or last two-thirds of the freshman year.[10]

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[7]Lins, L. J., and Pitt, H., "The 'Staying Power' and Rate of Progress of University of Wisconsin Freshmen," College and University, 29:98, October, 1953.

[8]McNeely, J. H., "College Student Mortality," bul. 1937, no. 11, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., 1938, p. 8

[9]Iffert, Robert E., "Study of College Student Retention and Withdrawal," College and University, 31:440, Summer, 1956.

[10]Iffert, Ibid., p. 439.

These studies show that an average of over one-fourth of those who enroll in the colleges of the United States drop out during their freshman year and that an average of almost 40 percent of all college students drop out before graduating. This review of literature has emphasized the immensity of the problem of dropouts.

The Reasons For Dropping Out

The literature on dropouts pointed out multiple reasons for students withdrawing from college. A study of 1,196 dropouts made by Indiana State Teacher's College revealed the following reasons for withdrawing from college:

> 26 percent left to enter the armed forces.
> 19.5 percent left to take employment.
> 13.8 percent left on account of ill health.
> 6.8 percent transferred to other schools.
> 1.9 percent left for lack of funds.[11]

The last of these five reasons would seem to indicate that many of those who left in order to take fulltime employment were motivated, at least partially, by a desire to make money.

Study after study listed unsatisfactory grades as a prominent reason for dropping out. In a study of one class cycle at Indiana University, 1948-52, 38.3 percent were doing satisfactory work and 61.7 percent were doing unsatisfactory work at the time they left college.[12]

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[11] "Study of Official Withdrawals at Indiana State Teacher's College," Teacher's College Journal, 19:172, December, 1947.

[12] Koelsche, C. L., "A Study of Student Dropout Problem at Indiana University," Journal of Educational Research, 49:36, January, 1956.

Koelsche stated in this paper on the dropout problem at Indiana University that there were many contributing factors to making low grades. He said that if the primary and secondary reasons were combined, the data would show that the six major causes for withdrawal from Indiana University were: (1) lack of funds, (2) low scholarship, (3) contemplated marriage, (4) ill health, (5) loss of interest, and (6) required military service.[13]

Many claim that the lower requirements for entering public institutions as compared to private institutions largely explains the percentage of dropouts being so much higher in the public institutions. From a study at the University of Wisconsin, it was learned that students who were admitted on probation because of low high school grades on the average had limited potential. They appeared to be poor academic risks as a group. Nearly half of them were dropped from the University; only eight percent were graduated in four years.[14]

Iffert's study shows that two types of difficulties, academic and financial, dominate the reasons for discontinuing attendance in college. He stated, "Academic difficulties are more serious for first year dropouts, whereas the reverse is true for those who drop out after the first year."[15] Since his study was made during the years of the Korean war, it is not surprising that the third reason in weight was military.

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[13]Ibid., p. 362.

[14]Lins and Pitt, op. cit., p. 99.

[15]Iffert, op. cit., p. 442.

Factors Relating To Dropouts

Since certain factors relating to dropouts were brought out in Iffert's report and were made points of study in this paper, it is necessary to mention these factors.[16]

Persistence. The question is, "How do the persistence records of students who enrolled in institutions that operate on the quarter system compare with the records of students in institutions operating on the semester system?"

Measured both in terms of the numbers remaining, and in terms of length of persistence, the advantage is clearly with the institutions operating on the semester basis. One would conclude that increasing the number of stopping places increases the number of dropouts. However, there are no data to test the corollary inference that increasing the number of starting places increases the probability of starting.

High school standing. A related question is, "What bearing does standing in high school graduating class have upon length of survival in higher educational institutions?"

According to Iffert's figures[17] it can be said, in general, that students from the top fifth of their high school class will survive in college twice as long as those from the bottom fifth. Also, the students coming from the second fifth of their high school class have 22 percent better prospects of survival than do those finishing in the fourth fifth.

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[16] Ibid., p. 440.

[17] Ibid., p. 441.

These conclusions are based upon the fact that universities graduated 38.8 percent of all their entering freshmen in regular progression but they graduated 56.3 percent of those who graduated in the top tenth of the high school class and 52.1 percent of those who graduated in top fifth. On the other hand, only one in eight from the bottom fifth of the high school class graduated.

Grades. Another pertinent question is, "How do the college grades of dropouts compare with the grades of those who survive?"

The average grades of first year dropouts are lower than the average grades of first year students who survive for longer periods. Iffert points out that low academic performance is not the only reason for dropouts for there is evidence of a high mortality rate among those of high academic rating.[18] Approximately one-third of the freshman casualities earned higher grades than the senior average. His findings show that the level of freshman grades is not a very potent factor in the decision to transfer to another school.

It was unfortunate that a study of dropouts as broad as Iffert's was so unduly upset by the effect of the Korean war. However, more recent studies on individual campuses reveal that, aside from the economic and war crises, the factors influencing dropping out of college are more or less constant.

This summary of Iffert's study showed that quarter system schools have more dropouts than semester schools, that the higher academic achievement in high school the longer the persistence in college, and

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[18]Ibid., p. 441.

that the average grades of first year dropouts are lower than the average grades of those who survive for longer periods.

These investigations in literature showed that the problem of dropouts is a major college problem and that the two major reasons for withdrawals are economic and academic.

The problem of dropouts at MSC is the reason for having made this study. The first step in this study of the factors related to dropouts in the 1960-61 freshman class at MSC is reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSES OF SELECTED FACTORS IN FRESHMAN DROPOUTS

There were 1,020 entering freshmen who took the Montana State College placement tests during the Freshman Week program in the fall of 1960. This group constituted the study group for this paper. There were 204, or exactly 20 percent of the 1,020, who withdrew during their freshman year. These withdrawals constituted the group for detailed study in this paper.

In this study an analysis was made of six factors pertaining to the freshman dropouts. These analyses, as presented in this chapter, are: (1) the type of high school they attended, (2) their rank in the high school graduation class, (3) the curriculum in which they enrolled in MSC, (4) the scores they made on the entrance tests, (5) the grade point average they attained (if any) during the period they were enrolled in MSC, and (6) the date they dropped out of school.

Information for these analyses was obtained from three sources: (1) the placement test scores and indices booklet for September, 1960, published by the testing and counseling service of MSC, (2) the alphabetical list of freshman students with rank in class as of the beginning of winter and spring quarters of 1960-61, published by the office of the registrar of MSC, and (3) the records of this freshman class kept by the office of the registrar of MSC. Although these records were not for general distribution, there were no purely confidential records used in this study.

Type of High School Attended

These are the seven types of high schools which were represented by the 1,020 freshmen who took the MSC placement tests in the fall of 1960:

1. County
2. Private
3. First class
4. Second class
5. Third class
6. Out-of-state
7. High school equivalency by G.E.D. test[1]

There are 16 county high schools and 21 private high schools of Montana in this study. Brief descriptions of the three classes of high schools are: (1) first class in districts having a population of 8,000 persons or more, (2) second class in districts having a population from 1,000 to 8,000 persons, and (3) third class in districts having a population of less than 1,000.

The second and third class high schools lost a larger percent of their enrollment by dropouts than the other five types of high schools combined. Of the 373 freshmen from second and third class high schools 24.4 percent withdrew during their first year at MSC. Of the 288 students from first class high schools only 11.5 percent withdrew. Although second class high schools represented 26.4 percent of the total enrollment, this type high school accounted for 32.5 percent of the

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[1]The Graduate Educational Development Tests are tests given to non-graduates of high schools to see if they qualify for college entrance.

dropouts. Whereas first class high schools represented 28.2 percent of the total enrollment, they accounted for only 16.2 percent of the dropouts. The percentages of dropouts from the other types of high schools were comparable to their percentages of total enrollment.

The percent of total enrollment that withdrew from each type of high school and the relation of the percentages of dropouts to percentages of total enrollment are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. PERCENT OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT OF FRESHMAN CLASS AT MSC THAT WITHDREW AND THE RELATION OF PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS TO PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN EACH TYPE OF HIGH SCHOOL

Type of H.S.	Percent of total enrollment that withdrew			Relation of percentage of dropouts to percentage of total enrollment	
	No. in study	No. of dropouts	% of each type that withdrew	% of 1,020 total	% of 204 dropouts
County	160	36	22.5	15.6	17.6
Private	36	8	22.2	3.5	3.9
First class	288	33	11.5	28.2	16.2**
Second class	269	66	24.6	26.4	32.5
Third class	104	25	24.0	10.2	12.3
Out-of-state	158	33	20.9	15.4	16.3
G. E. D.	5	3	60.0	.5	1.5

** Significant .01

It is shown in Table 1 that the average percent of each type that withdrew is 22.6 percent for all high schools excluding first class and G. E. D. tests. However, only 11.5 percent of the freshman from first class high schools withdrew. In other words, there are 100 percent more

withdrawals by students from other high schools than by students from first class high schools.

A $\tilde{z}$ test[2] of significance was run on these figures and percents and the result was that there was a significant difference at the one percent level when comparing the first class high school dropouts and those of each of the other types of high schools. There was no significant difference in the percentages of withdrawals of out-of-state students and Montana students.

High School Rank of Freshman Dropouts

The average ranks of high school students entering MSC as freshmen over the past five years show that 50 percent have ranked in the upper third of their high school classes, 35 percent have ranked in the middle third, and 15 percent have ranked in the lower third. In order to point out the very slight variation over the past five years, Table 2 is given of the percentages from these three rank divisions.

Only a small percentage of the 1960 freshman class with which this paper deals came from the lower third rank of their high school graduating classes. This 14 percent is also a low for the five years, 1956-1960.

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[2]Downie, N. M., and Heath, R. W., Basic Statistical Methods, p. 137. This $\tilde{z}$ test for significant difference between two percentages shows whether or not the difference is by chance. The one percent level says that there is only one chance out of 100 of this being by chance.

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGES OF ENTERING FRESHMAN AT MSC FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS FROM THE THREE HIGH SCHOOL RANK DIVISIONS

Year	Percentages		
	Upper third	Middle third	Lower third
1956	50	35	15
1957	51	33	16
1958	48	38	14
1959	50	33	17
1960	49	37	14

For this dropout study an analysis was made of only those freshmen who entered MSC in the fall of 1960. Only 11.6 percent of those students who had come from the upper third rank of their high school class dropped out during their freshman year, but 33.1 percent of those from the lower third rank of their high school class dropped out. Although only 13.8 percent of the freshman class came from the lower third rank of their high school class, 22.6 percent of the dropouts were from this lower third. On the other hand, 48.6 percent of the freshman class came out of the upper third, but this rank accounts for only 27.6 percent of the dropouts.

The percent of total enrollment that withdrew from each of the three high school ranks and the relation of the percentages of dropouts in each rank to percentages of total enrollment are shown in Table 3.

It appears significant that only 56 of the 489 who ranked in the upper third of their high school class withdrew, but 49 of the 139 in the lower third of their class withdrew. The $\tilde{z}$ test of significance showed

that there was no significant difference between the lower and middle ranks. There was a significant difference at the one percent level between the lower and upper ranks and also between the middle and upper ranks.

TABLE 3. PERCENT OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY HIGH SCHOOL RANKS OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS AT MSC THAT WITHDREW AND THE RELATION OF PERCENTAGES OF DROPOUTS TO PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN EACH RANK

Rank	Percent of total enrollment that withdrew			Relation of percentage of dropouts to percentage of total enrollment	
	No. in study*	No. of dropouts	% of each rank that withdrew	% of 1,020 total	% of 204 dropouts
Lower third	139	46	33.1	13.8	22.6
Middle third	378	95	25.6	37.6	46.6
Upper third	489	56	11.6	48.6	27.6

*High school rank was not available for 14 of the 1,020 students.

Divisional Curriculum

There are five divisions of Montana State College: (1) Agriculture, (2) Education, (3) Engineering, (4) Science, and (5) Professional Schools. The Professional Schools division had 18.1 percent of those enrolled to drop out but the Agriculture division had 30.6 percent of those enrolled to drop out. Agriculture represented only 9.6 percent of the total enrollment but 14.7 percent of the dropouts. These and other

data concerning all the divisions are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4. PERCENT OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY DIVISIONAL CURRICULUM OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS AT MSC THAT WITHDREW AND THE RELATION OF PERCENTAGES OF DROPOUTS TO PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN EACH DIVISION

Division	Percent of total enrollment that withdrew			Relation of percentage of dropouts to percentage of total enrollment	
	No. in study*	No. of dropouts	% of each division	% of 1,020 total	% of 204 dropouts
Agriculture	98	30	30.6	9.6	14.7
Education	143	26	18.4	14.0	12.7
Engineering	206	40	19.4	20.0	19.6
Science	268	54	20.0	26.2	26.4
Professional Schools	271	50	18.1	26.3	24.5

*There was no curriculum listing for 34 of the 1,020 total.

The large percentage of Agriculture dropouts could be explained at least partly by the seasonal work on ranches and farms which permitted attendance for only a part of the year. The Education division was second to the Professional Schools division in persistence. The percentages of the total freshmen enrolled and total dropouts for the divisions of both Engineering and Science were approximately the same.

The $\tilde{z}$ test showed that the differences in the percentages of those enrolled and of those dropping out between the Agriculture division and the other divisions were significant at the five percent level. The difference is significant at the one percent level between the Agriculture division and the Professional Schools division. There are no

significant differences between any of the other divisions.

Aptitude As A Factor

Placement tests were given the entering freshmen in Mathematics, Aptitude, and Achievement. Literature shows that the Ohio aptitude test has been found to be the best predictor of college success of any of the standard aptitude tests. It indicates aptitude for college level learning. For this reason the other test scores have not been considered in this study of dropouts.

The scores on the Ohio aptitude test were recorded by a scaled score of one to nine based on a normal curve distribution to make classification of grades easier in the placement test scores and indices booklet. These scaled scores are referred to as stanines and fall into the following divisions: (1) stanines 1, 2, or 3 comprising the lowest 22.5 percent of the freshmen, (2) stanines 4, 5, or 6 comprising the middle 55 percent of the freshmen, and (3) stanines 7, 8, or 9 comprising the upper 22.5 percent of the freshmen.

The test scores showed that 28.8 percent of the lowest 22.5 percent of the freshmen withdrew; 20.6 percent of the middle 55 percent of the freshmen withdrew; and only 8.3 percent of the upper 22.5 percent of the freshmen withdrew. The lowest group comprises 22.5 percent of the total number of freshmen but 32.8 percent of the dropouts. The middle group has almost exactly the same percentage of the total enrolled and total dropouts--55.1 percent and 57.7 percent respectively. The upper group constitutes 22.5 percent of the total enrolled but only 9.5 per-

cent of the dropouts. These data are shown by the three stanine groups in Table 5.

TABLE 5. PERCENT OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY STANINE GROUPS OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS AT MSC THAT WITHDREW AND THE RELATION OF PERCENTAGES OF DROPOUTS TO PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN EACH GROUP

Stanines	Percent of total enrollment that withdrew			Relation of percentage of dropouts to percentage of total enrollment	
	No. in study*	No. of dropouts	% of each group	% of 1,020 total	% of 204 dropouts
1,2,3	229	66	28.8	22.5	32.8
4,5,6	562	116	20.6	55.1	57.7
7,8,9	229	19	8.3	22.5	9.5

*No test records were shown for three of the 204 dropouts.

This study of the stanine scores of the Ohio aptitude test showed that MSC loses the largest percentage from the lower 22.5 percent on the test. It also showed that some of the ones making the highest scores were among those withdrawing from college.

Grade Point Average

Perhaps the most significant data regarding the freshman dropouts concerned the academic achievement of the students while they were enrolled in MSC. Regardless of the students' backgrounds--what type of high school they attended or how they ranked in their high school class

--the question concerning the college staff should be how well these dropouts did during the time they were students at MSC.

The records of grades were recorded by grade point averages in the registrar's list but were translated into letter grades for convenience in this paper. As given in Chapter 1 of this paper the system used at MSC for grade point averages and their letter equivalents is: 3.50 and above is "A"; 2.50 to 3.49 is "B"; 1.50 to 2.49 is "C"; .50 to 1.49 is "D"; and .49 and below is "F". There were no grade point averages recorded for 26 of the freshman class. The major reason for this lack of record was that these students withdrew from college before spending enough time in school to have grades recorded with the registrar.

The data shows that it was not only the poorer students who were the dropouts of the freshman class. There were 85 dropouts who had made an average of "C"; 62 made "D"; 27 made "B"; 11 made "F"; and 3 were "A" students. Most of those who withdrew were "C" students. Whereas 45.6 percent of the freshman class were "C" students, only 41.2 percent of the dropouts were "C" students. This would indicate that there were major causes for withdrawals in this freshman class besides poor academic standing. Less than 50 percent of those with a "D" average dropped out. The "D" group made up 14.1 percent of the total class but accounted for 30.4 percent of the dropouts. The "B" students comprised 30.5 percent of the class but only 13.2 percent of the dropouts. Only three of the 47 "A" students dropped out during the year. A complete listing of the total students, the percentages of the total, and the percentages of the dropouts by letter grade groups is given in Table 6.

TABLE 6. PERCENT OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT BY GRADE AVERAGES OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS AT MSC THAT WITHDREW AND THE RELATION OF PERCENTAGES OF DROPOUTS TO PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN EACH GROUP

Grade*	Percent of total enrollment that withdrew			Relation of percentage of dropouts to percentage of total enrollment	
	No. in study	No. of dropouts	% of each group that withdrew	% of 1,020 total	% of 204 dropouts
A 3.5↑	47	3	6.4	4.6	1.5
B 2.5-3.99	311	27	8.7	30.5	13.2
C 1.5-2.49	465	85	18.3	45.6	41.2
D .5-1.99	144	62	43.1	14.1	30.4
F .49 -	15	11	73.3	1.5	5.4

*These letter grades are translated from the grade point averages listed at end of last quarter of attendance.

It is not surprising that 73.3 percent of those failing withdrew during the school year. The surprise is that 26.7 percent were still listed as being enrolled in the spring quarter after making "F's" the first two quarters. No doubt that these were on probation. Those in the "F" group represented only 1.5 percent of the total freshmen but 5.4 percent of the 204 dropouts.

26 HD's processed.

35.8 Academic Dropouts

Times of Withdrawals

The times of the largest number of withdrawals during the year were the ends of the fall and winter quarters.[3] There were 82 withdrawals listed on the closing date of the fall quarter and 89 listed on the closing date of the winter quarter. These 171 withdrawals are 83.9 percent of the total dropouts. These large numbers of withdrawals at the end of the quarters lend strength to the argument that quarter systems promote more withdrawals than semester systems simply because the quarter systems offer more stopping places. The investigation of dropouts shows that many of these students took employment because of the necessity of working their way through MSC. Financial needs permit their being in school only one or two quarters each year.

Besides these withdrawals on the closing dates of the fall and winter quarters there were 14 withdrawals during the fall quarter, 13 withdrawals during the winter quarter, and 6 withdrawals during the spring quarter. These 33 students who withdrew during the quarters are divided into the number of withdrawals per month as follows: 1-September, 11-October, 1-November, 1-December, 7-January, 5-February, 1-March, 4-April, and 2-May.

Ratio of Male to Female

In this freshman class of 1,020 there were 654 men and 366 women, or 64 percent and 36 percent respectively. Of the 204 dropouts 152 were

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[3]The date of the end of the fall quarter was December 22, 1960. The date of the winter quarter was March 18, 1961.

men and 52 were women, or 74.5 percent and 25.5 percent respectively. This means that for this class the women were significantly more persistent than the men.

Foreign Students

There were 21 students from foreign countries in the freshman class. Of these there were 11 students from Canada and 10 from other countries. Only two of these dropped out. Both of these were from the 11 who enrolled from Canada.

All the statistics for Chapter 3 were gathered from records that were available on the campus. In order to obtain more insight into the type of student who withdrew and to learn the more personal reasons for withdrawal, a questionnaire was sent to each of the 204 dropouts. The summary of information given on these questionnaires constituted the material presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION FROM DROPOUT QUESTIONNAIRE

One of the most important phases of this study concerned an investigation of why the 204 students withdrew from MSC during their freshman year. Perhaps a study of these reasons would enable the college to help retain more of the capable students, since the dropouts are obviously not just those who are academically incapable (Table 6). The records showed that 55.9 percent of the dropouts were "C", "B", or "A" students. Only 35.8 percent were "D" and "F" students. There were no grades recorded for the other 8.3 percent.

In order to gain information regarding the present status of the withdrawals and their reasons for withdrawal, a questionnaire was sent in June, 1961, to the 204 dropouts in the study group. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: (1) reasons for discontinuance, (2) reasons for going to college, and (3) present plans. Replies were received from 116 students. Anonymity of those responding was protected by a coding system. A coding system was a necessity for relating the questionnaire information with the data in the placement test scores and indices booklet and the records secured from the registrar's office. The coding system used permitted analysis by grade point average, sex, curriculum, high school attended, high school rank, and stanine scores on the Ohio aptitude test.

The number answering the questionnaire was checked against the number of dropouts in each grade level group. It was found that an average of 63 percent of the ones making "A", "B", "C", or "D" responded

to the questionnaire. In the small group of 11 with an "F" average, only three responded to the questionnaire.

Special measures were taken to assure the greatest possible number of replies to the questionnaire. Besides the protection of anonymity, the prestige of the Division of Education was used to encourage a reply.[1] Also a personal note was written on each questionnaire.[2] A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix "A" of this paper. Analyses of reasons for withdrawals are presented in the next divisions.

Analysis By Importance

The 20 items of the questionnaire of reasons given for withdrawing from college were grouped into six related classes of reasons in order to present a clearer picture of their relative importance. These six groups were: (1) health, (2) financial, (3) academic, (4) marital, (5) dissatisfactions, and (6) others. The items in Table 7 have been renumbered from the numbers on the questionnaire in order to place each related item in sequence under the group to which it belonged.

The respondent was given four columns of choices in which he was to check the relative importance of each reason for withdrawal which applied to his case. These four choices were assigned weight values in order that a mean level of importance could be calculated for each

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[1] The name of William A. Johnstone, director of educational research at MSC, was signed to the questionnaire.

[2] "This will take only a few minutes to fill in and we will appreciate so much your prompt return of the questionnaire. You need not sign your name. Sincere thanks."

reason for withdrawal. These four choices of relative importance for each reason and the weighting assigned each choice in the compilation of Table 7 and Table 8 were:

Response	Weighting
Of no importance or does not apply	0
Of slight importance	1
Of moderate importance	2
Of great importance	3

Financial and academic reasons for withdrawal are shown by the data in Table 7 to have been primary for this group of dropouts. The six groups of reasons for withdrawals and their mean levels of importance are listed in Table 7. The list of reasons for discontinuance of college were selected from the Iffert study.[3] The weighting system was also the same as that which Iffert used throughout his study.[4]

A check of the reasons for withdrawal revealed the following rank order of importance as given by the 116 dropouts who replied to the questionnaire:

1. Financial (self)
2. I transferred to another college
3. Financial (family)
4. I lacked interest in my subjects
5. I was discouraged by low grades

Many free response reasons for withdrawal were given under space 20 of the questionnaire listed, "Others." Only the free response which occurred most frequently, "Marriage and childbirth," is included in the list of reasons in Table 7. However, because of the significance of

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[3]Iffert, Bulletin 1958, No. 1, op. cit., p. 145.

[4]Ibid., p. 23.

these free responses of reasons given for withdrawal, a list of these is given in Appendix "B".

TABLE 7. MEAN LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL AS REPORTED BY THE 116 RESPONDENTS TO THE DROPOUT QUESTIONNAIRE

Reasons for withdrawal from MSC	Mean level of importance		
	Men	Women	Total
Health			
1. Illness or physical disability (self)	.157	.545	.267
2. Illness or physical disability (family)	.108	.182	.129
Financial			
3. Financial (self)	1.277	1.000	1.198
4. Financial (family)	.578	.848	.655
5. I was needed at home	.410	.424	.414
6. I took a fulltime job	.470	.333	.431
Academic			
7. I found college work too difficult	.386	.394	.388
8. I was discouraged by low grades	.590	.727	.629
9. I lacked interest in my subjects	.783	.273	.638
Marital			
10. I planned to be married soon	.072	.515	.198
11. I had marital difficulties	.036	.000	.026
12. Marriage - childbirth	.000	.364	.103
Dissatisfactions			
13. I was dissatisfied with MSC housing	.301	.091	.241
14. I was dissatisfied with MSC professors	.265	.242	.259
15. I did not receive the help I needed from dorm adviser	.072	.030	.060
16. I did not receive the help I needed from curriculum adviser	.277	.152	.241
17. I did not receive the help I needed from MSC counseling service	.133	.000	.095
18. I was lonesome and unhappy	.169	.333	.216
Other			
19. I left to enter military service	.193	.000	.138
20. I transferred to another college	.807	.515	.724

Other reasons for withdrawing, as shown by the free responses listed in Appendix "B", are mostly variations of those in Table 7.

Analysis By Sex and Rank in High School Class

An analysis of reasons for withdrawal was made from the dropout questionnaire by sex and standing in high school class. These reasons are shown in Table 8 by rank order of importance. The numbers of the items of reasons as given in Table 7 rather than as given in the questionnaire are used in the tabulation for Table 8.

Finances were listed as the most important reason for withdrawal by all the men and women of all ranks of their high school classes except the women of the lower third of high school rank who listed discouragement over low grades as the most important reason for withdrawal.

TABLE 8. ITEMS OF REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL LISTED IN RANK ORDER OF IMPORTANCE BY NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS IN TABLE 7 BY SEX AND HIGH SCHOOL RANK

Rank order of importance	Items listed by adjusted questionniare number					
	Men			Women		
	Top third	Middle third	Lower third	Top third	Middle third	Lower third
Most important	3	3	3	3	3	8
Second	4	20	8	1	4	7
Third	6	9	9	4,20*	8	2,5,9*
Fourth	9	8	20		5	10
Fifth	5	4	16	10	10,11 14,18*	
Total no. of students	16	49	18	17	12	4

*These are tie items in rank of importance

The academic reasons, items 7-8-9, figured more prominently in the lower and middle third of both men and women than in the upper third.

Analysis of Present Status and Plans

The third part of the dropout questionnaire concerned the present occupation and future plans of the dropout. Answers in this part showed that 79.3 percent of those who withdrew from college were planning to continue their education. Many of them stated that they were working at present in order to earn enough money to enable them to return to college. Almost one-fourth of the dropouts transferred to another school. The present status and plans of the dropouts are shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9. PERCENTAGES OF 116 REPORTING WITHDRAWALS WHO ARE CONTINUING OR PLANNING TO CONTINUE THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION

Present status or plans of dropouts	Percentage of those who reported
Transferred to another college	23.3
Transferred but plan to return to MSC	2.6
Plan to re-enroll at MSC	33.6
Plan to re-enroll at another school	19.8
Total percentage of reporting dropouts planning to continue their education	79.3

If those return to college who indicated on the returned questionnaire that this was their plans, then the final number of graduates from this freshman class will be considerably above the 60 percent national average who finish. However, statistics show that many hazards are involved once a student has withdrawn from college.

Summary of Reasons For Going to College

The second part of the dropout questionnaire consisted of 15 reasons for going to college with four columns for checking the degree of importance for each reason. The top six reasons given by the dropouts who answered the questionnaire were: (1) I felt a college degree was necessary for the kind of work desired, (2) I felt a college education would prepare me for a better paying job, (3) I had a compelling interest in one particular field in which I wanted to specialize, (4) I wanted to try to find the work for which I was most suited, (5) I felt college training would give me more prestige in years to come, and (6) My teachers felt that I was good college material.

There were two persons who listed item 8, "I wanted the fun of college life that I had always read about," as the most important reason for having entered college. One person gave as his most important reason, item 14, "I thought that college would be a good place to meet the type of person I would like to marry."

These steps in the examining of the questionnaire have concluded the investigations of the college records and the summary of the questionnaire. A summary of the study, some conclusions based on the study, and some recommendations will be presented in the last chapter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the data found in this study is given in this final chapter. Some conclusions are drawn regarding the dropout problem of freshmen at MSC. Also, because of the conviction that some measures can be taken to decrease unnecessary withdrawals from the freshman class of MSC, recommendations are made of some of these measures.

Summary

The summary is presented by the chapter divisions of this paper: (1) the review of literature, (2) the records of the dropouts, and (3) the data from the dropout questionnaire.

Review of literature. From the review of dropout literature the following information was obtained:

1. The dropout problem is common to all colleges and universities in the United States.

2. The dropout problem is greater in the state operated college where the "open-door" policy of admission is practiced than in the private and church-related colleges which have more rigid entrance requirements.

3. The national surveys show that about 60 percent of the students who enter colleges eventually graduate, although fewer than 40 percent graduate from the institutions of first registration in normal progression.

4. The national average for freshman dropouts is 27.6 percent

but the MSC dropouts totaled 20 percent of the freshman class.

5. Persistence is higher in those institutions which operate on the semester system than in those on the quarter system.

Records of the dropouts. The review and analysis of the students' records yielded the following data:

1. Of the 1,020 entering freshmen at MSC in the fall of 1960, there were 204, or 20 percent, who withdrew from college during their first year.

2. Only 11.5 percent of the freshman class who came from first class high schools were dropouts. Twice this percentage of those from all other high schools were dropouts.

3. One-third of the freshmen who had ranked academically in the lower third of their high school class dropped out. Only 11.6 percent of those who had come from the upper third of their high school class dropped out. This is even a more impressive percentage when it is remembered that almost 50 percent of the freshmen were from the upper third of their high school class.

4. The division of Agriculture had the largest percentage of dropouts and the division of Professional Schools had the lowest percentage of dropouts from the freshman class.

5. There were 28.8 percent of those in the lower stanine scores (1, 2, or 3) on the Ohio aptitude test who dropped out. Only 8.3 percent of those making stanine scores of 7, 8, or 9 withdrew. However, 57.7 percent of the total dropouts were from the middle group. Of this middle group (4, 5, or 6), 20.6 percent withdrew.

6. The largest percentage of the 204 dropouts (41.2 percent)

were "C" students. Also, 30.4 percent were "D" students and only 1.5 percent were "A" students.

7. The two times of largest withdrawals were the end of the fall quarter when 82 withdrew and the end of the winter quarter when 89 withdrew.

8. The sex division was: (1) Men were 64 percent of the freshman class and 74.5 percent of the dropouts, and (2) Women were 36 percent of the freshman class and 25.5 percent of the dropouts.

Reasons for the dropout. Questionnaires were sent to the 204 dropouts and 116 responded. The following information was obtained from these responses:

1. The problem of personal finances was listed as the most important reason for withdrawal by all ranks in the high school classes except by the women who had ranked in the lower third of their class. This group of women indicated that low grades had been the main reason for withdrawal.

2. The reasons for withdrawal in order of importance as shown by those responding to the questionnaire were: (1) Financial (self), (2) Transferred to another school, (3) Financial (family), (4) Lacked interest in subjects, and (5) Discouraged by low grades.

3. Almost one-fourth (23.3 percent) of those who answered the questionnaire had transferred to other schools and over one-half (56 percent) indicated that their present plans were to continue their higher education.

Conclusions

1. The proportion of freshman dropouts at MSC is largely the same as the national average of one-fourth to one-fifth of freshman classes withdrawing during their first year.

2. Since only 35.8 percent of the dropouts were "D" and "F" students, then other than academic reasons must be sought to explain the causes of withdrawals from the MSC freshman class.

3. The reasons for withdrawals from MSC are the same as the reasons given nationally for withdrawing from college.

4. The dropout problem at MSC is a major problem as shown by the fact that one-fifth of entering freshmen withdrew during their first year of enrollment.

Recommendations

Not all of the freshmen at MSC who were passing academically could have been retained at MSC but there is no doubt that some measures could be taken to help students remain in school who listed dissatisfactions as their reasons for withdrawal. Some suggested measures are:

1. A more thorough screening could be made of the students who apply for withdrawal.

2. A closer examination of records by the freshman advisers could spot many potential dropouts.

3. Head residents in the dormitories and other housing representatives need to be encouraged to report immediately the names of students who were discussing withdrawing from school. The student welfare

office or the testing and counseling services could help work out many problems if they are notified in time.

4. If freshmen could be engaged in group "beef sessions" with staff representatives present, no doubt they would solve many of their own problems of dissatisfaction and remain in school.

5. The number, especially of men, who indicated on the questionnaire a lack of interest in their subjects suggests that better pre-college counseling is needed.

6. The reader is referred to Chapter 3 of Barnett's professional paper, The Status of Dropouts and Ways to Improve the Holding Power of the Secondary School.[1] Although this paper is a discussion relating to the secondary school, there are helpful suggestions which are applicable to the college situation.

Dropout studies are vital for the correcting of a most acute problem in education in the United States today. Iffert has well summarized the real intent of a dropout study when he mentions the acute shortages of professional and technical manpower today:

> Information and understanding to guide action in the recruitment and retention of able students are needed by those who finance, govern, and administer higher education in the United States. Acute shortages of professional and technical manpower have convinced educators and employers that steps must be taken to reduce the educational mortality rate of capable students in our educational systems.[2]

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[1] Barnett, J. W., The Status of Dropouts and Ways to Improve the Holding Power of the Secondary School, MSC, August, 1959.

[2] Iffert, Bulletin 1958, No. 1, op. cit., p. iii.

The number of freshman dropouts at MSC and the type of students who are withdrawing from college would indicate that MSC should join with all other colleges in an attempt to solve this problem.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Sent to the 204 Dropouts, Freshman Class (1960-61)

STUDY OF MONTANA STATE COLLEGE WITHDRAWALS

Dear Former Student:

We are extremely anxious to make a survey of the Montana State College program as pertains to withdrawals. This is similar to surveys made by the U. S. Department of Education that have proved to be great aids to institutions trying to give maximum service to their students. We feel that your answers on this questionnaire can be of great help to MSC in giving better service to students.

William Johnstone, Director of Educational Research

I. Following are the reasons usually given for withdrawal from college. Please check the relative importance of each reason in the proper square to the left of the reason.

Of no importance or does not apply	Of slight importance	Of moderate importance	Of great importance	REASONS FOR DISCONTINUANCE
1.				Illness or physical disability (self)
2.				Illness or physical disability (family)
3.				Financial (self)
4.				Financial (family)
5.				I found college work too difficult
6.				I was needed at home
7.				I planned to be married soon
8.				I took a full-time job
9.				I was lonesome and unhappy
10.				I had marital difficulties
11.				I was discouraged by low grades
12.				I left to enter military service
13.				I lacked interest in my subjects
14.				I was dissatisfied with MSC housing
15.				I was dissatisfied with MSC professors
16.				I did not receive the help I needed from dorm adviser

17.					I did not receive the help I needed from curriculum adviser
18.					I did not receive the help I needed from MSC counseling service
19.					I transferred to another college
20.					Other (write in)_____

II. Following are the reasons usually given for going to college. Looking back to the period before you entered college, check the relative importance of each reason in the proper square to the left of the reason.

	Of no importance, or does not apply	Of slight importance	Of moderate importance	Of great importance	REASONS FOR GOING TO COLLEGE
1.					I felt that a college degree was necessary for the kind of work desired
2.					My parents insisted on my going to college
3.					My friends were all going to college
4.					I had nothing else that I wanted to do
5.					Community leaders encouraged me to go to college
6.					My teachers felt that I was good college material
7.					I felt a college education would prepare me for a better paying job
8.					I wanted the fun of college life that I had always read about
9.					In my family young people had always gone to college
10.					I had a compelling interest in one particular field in which I wanted to specialize, namely:_____
11.					I wanted to try to find the work for which I was most suited
12.					I felt college training would give me more prestige in years to come
13.					The persons I respected most in my community had gone to college
14.					I thought that college would be a good place to meet the type of person I would like to marry
15.					Others (write in)_____

III. Further information:

1. Present occupation_____
2. Do you plan to reenroll in college? Here_____,Elsewhere_____
3. What are your life plans as of this moment?_____

APPENDIX B

Reasons For Discontinuance Listed "Others" (20)

Because of their interest value as well as giving some very truthful reasons for withdrawing, the following reasons are listed exactly as they were written on the questionnaires.

1. Courses not hard enough.

2. Unable to find curriculum desired.

3. Felt navy would help prepare me for school after enlistment is over.

4. Just wanted a break.

5. My grade for the 1st quarter wasn't good enough to extend the government loan.

6. Never really wanted to go. My greatest interest lies in Beautician work.

7. Not dissatisfied with all professors, just my history professor.

8. I felt I was not learning enough in my curriculum at MSC to continue. My professor offered very little personal attention or advice to the majority of his students. I could not afford to continue college when I could learn as much on my own. However this criticism applies only to my major which is art. I found all of my other classes and teachers interesting and very educational.

9. I didn't know what I wanted to be.

10. Parents thought grades weren't good enough. Under "What are your life plans as of this moment?" this student wrote, "Very confused."

11. I object to being forced to live in the dorms.

12. Overtired.

13. I found the transition from independent, self-employed farming, to the restrictions of college life to be more than I was able to cope with. The restrictions of activity imposed by studies, being tied down by not having the use of a car, and the abrupt change from physical work to mental effort were too great. I consider that the regulation regarding the use of cars was overzealously enforced.

14. Father had filled in, "Killed in accident."

15. The fellow I was to room with was killed and this created a mental block.

16. The electronics course I am interested in was not offered.

17. Could not bring myself to study as I should. Will re-enter Fall quarter.

18. I feel I was in wrong curriculum. Have decided to transfer.

19. Not a good student. Needed to get away from home awhile and out in another field.

20. I found math pretty hard for me and soon learned I would not make an A-1 engineer so I decided to change my major to Bus. Ad. I live in Missoula and the U. offers Bus. Ad. and cheaper for me to go here.

21. I was so dam mixed up I didin't know what to do.

22. Take too long to get into production. Would take 8 years and I am 37 now.

23. I was dissatisfied with Army R.O.T.C.

24. Too many rules and regulations.