Analysis of DFW Rates: 2013-2017 Semesters

Jeff Bell
Institutional Research Faculty Fellow
• %DFW (D+, D, F, W, WU) rates exactly mirror the FTF dismissal rates
• Thus, poor performance in the classroom is likely the entire cause of our URM graduation gap
• This is also true for the gender gap
• Using grades as a proxy for the URM gap has several advantages
  • Can track progress after one semester instead of waiting 4-6 years
  • Much larger sample sizes (~50x more)
• Dismissal and %DFW rates are strongly correlated with HS eligibility scores, but not for dropouts
• AS URM students enter with lower average HS eligibility scores, this explains part of the URM gap
• Even correcting for HS eligibility scores, there is still a URM gap (this is also true for the gender gap)
- The risk of URM students getting a poor grade is ~50% higher than for non-URMs in any type of course.
- DFW rates are ~70% higher for LD courses than for UD courses.
- LD GE rates are 15% less than LD Non-GE, while UD GE rates are 19% greater than UD Non-GE.
- WI&Z courses have rates ~35% lower than other GE courses.
Class size Effects.

- DFW rates more than double as class size increases for both LD and UD courses
- UD course DFW rates plateau at ~50 students, while LD rates continue to increase
- There are also subject specific effects – removing MATH eliminates the bump in Rates in the 31-40 size range
Class Size Effects by URM and Gender.
- Large class sizes disproportionately effect URM and females, with URM females being most affected
- Exception is a course in the ~200 size range with very poor DFW rates for males (CHEM)
LD Subject Effects.

- There are large differences in DFW rates between subjects, from a low of 0.6% in Nursing to a high of 32% in LD ACCT courses, over a 30-fold difference.
- MATH fails almost twice as many students as HIST, the next largest source of failures.
College Effects on LD URM Gap.

- There are large differences in LD DFW rates between colleges.
- There are also differences in the size of the URM gap.
There are large differences in LD DFW rates between departments.

There are also differences in the size of the URM gap, from zero for SWRK to over 2-fold for SOCI.
Course Effects on LD URM Gap.

- There are large differences in LD DFW rates between courses within a department.
- There are also differences in the size of the URM gap.
- Note: We can also generate %DFW x Number of DFWs by Instructor.