

Understanding Student attrition in Contemporary Australian Universities:

Evidence from an Empirical Case Study

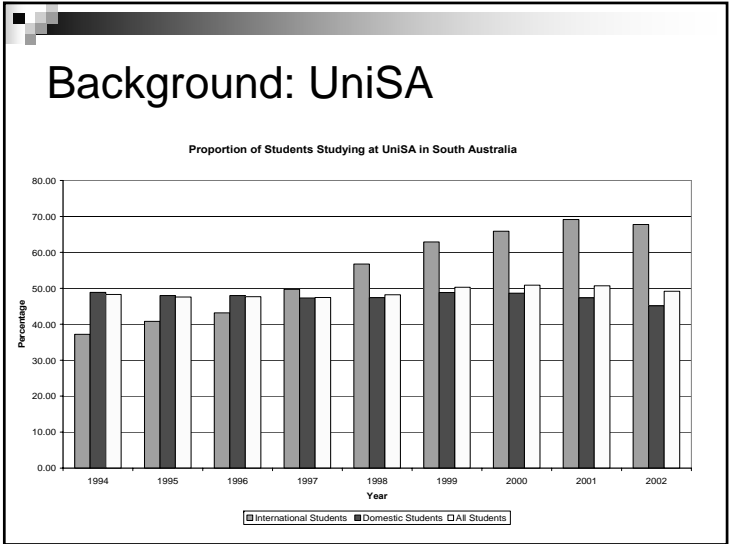
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Structure of the Presentation

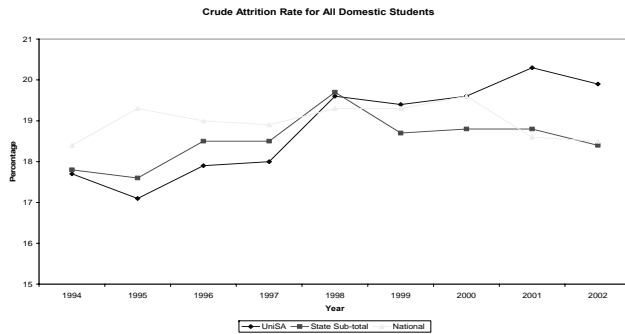
- Motivations
- Background
- Literature Review
- Descriptive Statistics
- Findings
- Discussions

Motivations

- Why study attrition?
 - Significant resources have been invested in recruiting students
 - Teaching and Learning Performance Fund
 - Funding & Reputation
- Why UniSA?
 - Largest student body in SA
 - Diversified student sources: trend among higher education sector?



Attrition at UniSA: Domestic Students



Business Division

■ Student composition

□ 33,620 enrolled in 2005: 50% of all higher education students enrolled in SA

□ 40% are parttimers; one third of

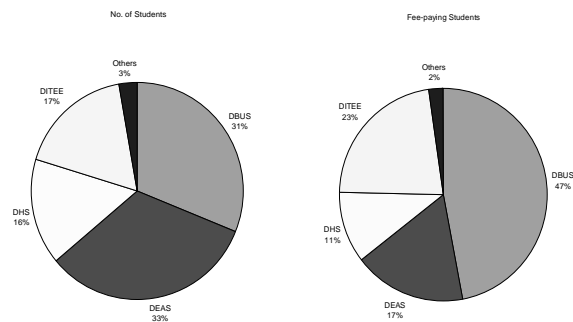
■ Funding & Reputation

■ Why Business students at UniSA?

□ Any Largest student body in SA

□ Diversified student sources: trend among higher education sector?

Background: Business Division at UniSA



Literature Review

■ Theoretical Foundation

□ Economic: ability to pay; cost/benefit analysis

□ Psychological: entry characteristics

□ Sociological:

□ Interactionist:

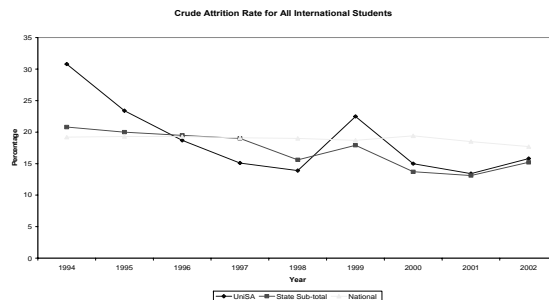
Literature Review (continued)

■ Factors

- Previous academic achievement
- First preference
- Quality of teaching
- Basis of entry
- Financial ability
- Family support
- Parent education
- Language
- Part-time
- Time of dropping out

Attrition at UniSA: Domestic Students

Attrition at UniSA: International Students



Pair-wise institutional Comparison of Adjusted Attrition Rate by DEST

- Commencing bachelor level undergraduate students
 - Statistically lower than 16 universities
 - Statistically higher than 8 universities
 - No statistical difference between UniSA and other 13 universities
- Non-Commencing bachelor level undergraduate students
 - Statistically lower than 15 universities
 - Statistically higher than 12 universities
 - No statistical difference between UniSA and other 10 universities

UniSA's Relatively Teaching Performance in Law, Business and Economics Group

	Full-time Employment	Further full-time or Part-time Study	Satisfaction with Generic Skills	Satisfaction with Good Teaching	Overall Satisfaction	Progress Rate	Retention Rate
UniSA	27	38	25	23	28	33	24
Swinburne	23	33	3	9	6	11	10
Melbourne	5	18	16	25	10	3	1
Wollogong	1	15	13	19	4	6	15
Adelaide	15	1	37	37	35	23	8
Sunshine Coast	11	37	1	4	1	34	35
Maritime College	26	27	2	1	38	7	38
Canberra	31	20	18	15	22	1	9

UniSA's Relatively Teaching Performance in Law, Business and Economics Group

	Full-time Employment	Further full-time or Part-time Study	Satisfaction with Generic Skills	Satisfaction with Good Teaching	Overall Satisfaction	Progress Rate	Retention Rate
Median	80.9	26.1	71.8	39.3	70.3	82.8	82.2
Gap btw UniSA & Median	2.865	13.98	1.605	0.965	3.49	6.42	1.895

Source: DEST Website

Data

- Students enrolled and withdrawn in 2005: 10100 enrolled; 442 dropout
- Information Requested:
 - ID, gender, Gender, basis of admission, program, commence date, academic loading, home campus, credits received, funding sources, language spoken at home, country of birth, postcode of current home address

Summary of Data

Category	Variables	Enrolled		Withdrawn	
		Total	Proportion (%)	Total	Proportion (%)
Gender	Female	5242	51.9	214	48.4
	Male	4858	48.1	228	51.6
Birth Country	Australia	4270	42.3	222	50.2
	Non-Australia	5830	57.7	220	49.8
Home Spoken Language	English	4846	48.0	255	57.7
	Chinese	3788	37.5	55	12.4
	Other	1466	14.5	132	29.9
Credits Received	Received	4173	41.3	112	25.3
	Not Received	5927	58.7	330	74.7

Category	Variables	Enrolled		Withdrawn	
		Total	Proportion (%)	Total	Proportion (%)
Funding source	Contribution Scheme	1787	17.7	132	29.9
	Fee-Paying	5677	56.2	170	38.5
	Other Higher Education	2636	26.1	140	31.7
Basis of Admission	Course	5633	55.8	225	50.9
	TAFE	699	6.9	28	6.3
	Secondary School	1987	19.7	132	29.9
	Mature Aged	471	4.7	20	4.5
Admit Year	Other	1310	13.0	37	8.4
	2005	3938	39.0	210	47.5
	2004	3276	32.4	126	28.5
Academic Load	Before 2004	2886	28.6	106	24.0
	Fulltime	5545	54.9	258	58.4
	Parttime	4555	45.1	184	41.6

Logistic Regression Results

Predictors	β coefficients	Exp (B)
birth country - Australia	0.53*** (0.151)	1.699
home spoken language - Chinese	-0.43** (0.184)	0.651
source of funding - Fee-paying	-0.818*** (0.184)	0.441
credits received	0.493*** (0.128)	1.637
basis of admission - Higher Ed Course	0.446** (0.194)	1.561
admit term-2005	0.36** (0.149)	1.434

- ## Model Fitness
- Nagelkerke-R2: 0.04
 - Chi-square: 221.943
 - Hosmer and Lemeshow Test: 0.005
 - Overall Correct Prediction (%)95.8

- ## Findings
- Awarding credits to students for their previous study is positively related to dropout ; Fee-paying students are less likely to dropout from the program;
 - Students who are born in overseas are less likely to dropout from a program compared to their Australia-born counterpart;
 - A sub-group of international students, namely Chinese speaking background students, are less likely to dropout from university;
 - While first year students tend to have higher chance to withdraw from a program, the fact of being first year student itself may not be a significant factor contributing to attrition.

Interpretation of Finding

- Too much help for students?
- Opportunity costs