

East Tennessee State University

Staff Senate

Meeting Minutes

Date: March 9, 2026

Time: 2:32 p.m. – 3:27 p.m.

Location: Culp Center 311 and Zoom

Facilitator: Cody Morelock, Staff Senate President

Scribe: William Cate, Staff Senate Secretary

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| Senators Present: Kari Albarado, Sharon Barger, Dan Bishop, William Cate, Kim Ferrell, David Finney, Archie Fortney, Joy Fulkerson, Brooke Garland, Wendy Guinn, Cody Henson, Suzy Hooven, Ethan Hutchinson, Rachel Kellogg, James Lively, Jenny Lockmiller, Eli Montana, Cody Morelock, Donna Nelson Barnes, Gina Osborne, Melanie Peters, Rusty Sells, Brayton Siddell, Aneida Skeens, Amy Slaughter, Ben Smith, Jessimine Strauss, Liz Thomas-Joseph |
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| Guests: B. Dye, J. Wang |
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| Absent: Joe Bidwell, Vanessa Canter, Rachel Colwell, Jennifer Crigger, O.J. Early, Crystal Maupin, Skylar Moore, Stefanie Murphy, Debbie Roach, Jeremy Watson |
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Agenda Overview

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction of Guest Speakers
 - a. Jessie Wang, Student Academic Success Working Group
3. Approval of Previous Minutes
 - a. February Approvals
4. Information Items
 - a. President's Report
 - b. Treasurer's Report
 - c. Committee Updates
5. Old Business & Follow Ups
6. New Business
7. Announcements, *What is on your mind?*
8. Adjourn

East Tennessee State University

Staff Senate

Meeting Notes

1. **Call to Order**

President Morelock called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

2. **Introduction of Guest Speakers**

President Morelock introduced Jessie Wang, Provost Fellow for Student Academic Success. Jessie Wang also serves as the Assistant Dean for Student Success and Access in the Clemmer College of Education and Human Development.

Jessie Wang presented about the Student Academic Success Working Group, which aims to address institutional barriers to undergraduate students at ETSU.

The working group has 4 main areas of focus: degree progression, first-year student academic experience, online learning experience, and undecided students. The working group has identified specific challenges and is developing recommendations for improving student retention, academic support services, and career exploration opportunities.

Jessie Wang reviewed the composition and goals of the working group, which includes 30 members representing all academic colleges and various administrative units.

3. **Approval of Previous Minutes**

President Morelock presented the February minutes for consideration. No corrections were needed. Senator Finney made a motion to approve the February minutes, and the motion was seconded by Senator Hooven. The motion carried, and the February minutes were approved.

4. **Information Items**

President's Report

Due to time constraints, President Morelock announced he will send his updates to the senate via email. The President's Report is provided below under *Supporting Documents & Reminders*

Treasurer's Report

President Morelock provided an update of the Staff Senate account balances.

East Tennessee State University

Staff Senate

- Main Account: \$9,693.64
- Awards Account: \$18,000.00
- Holiday Fund: \$632.44
- CBC: \$681.25

President Morelock and Senator Bishop provided an update on transferring the CBC funds to the larger Employee Assistance Fund. The committee overseeing EAF was not immediately agreeable to add a Staff Senate representative to the EAF committee. No vote was taken to determine the consolidation of the CBC fund into the EAF fund.

Committee Updates

Vice President provided an update on the upcoming Staff Celebration,

- Reminder, the staff award nomination window closes at 11:59 PM on Sunday, March 22.
- Flyers for the celebration will be distributed soon
 - Each flyer will contain a QR code for folks to use when reporting dietary restrictions.
 - Flyers will request (not require) RSVPs to the staff celebration. Each RSVP will be automatically entered into the door prize raffle.

5. Old Business & Follow Ups

None.

6. New Business

None.

7. Announcements, *What is on your mind?*

President Morelock announced that President Noland will join Staff Senate's April meeting.

8. Adjourn

Senator Sells made a motion to adjourn, and it was seconded by Senator Strauss. The meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

East Tennessee State University Staff Senate

Action Items Summary

Task

Responsible Party

Due Date

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Staff Senate

Supporting Documents & Reminders

See materials below for the Staff Senate President's Report and for the Student Academic Success Working Group presentation.



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**STUDENT ACADEMIC
SUCCESS WORK GROUP**



WORK GROUP GOALS

- 1) Identify and mitigate institutional **barriers** to undergraduate Student Academic Success.
- 2) Leverage **retention and graduation data** to drive strategic decision-making.
- 3) **Identify high-challenge courses** and points of academic difficulty across disciplines; align resources.
- 4) Increase awareness and use of **academic support services** (CTE, CFAA, etc.)
- 5) Bring **together** Academic Affairs and Student Life & Enrollment to tackle challenges together.
- 6) Better engage **faculty voice** in university-wide student success initiatives.
- 7) Promote **cross-college collaboration** on shared academic success strategies.
- 8) Provide a platform for **university-wide input** into student success planning and implementation.



A TRUE UNIVERSITY-WIDE EFFORT



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WORK GROUP REPRESENTATION



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COLLEGES AND UNITS REPRESENTED

- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Business and Technology
- College of Education & Human Development
- College of Health Sciences
- Quillen College of Medicine
- College of Nursing
- College of Public Health
- Gatton College of Pharmacy
- Graduate School
- Honors College
- Sherrod Library
- Council for Academic Chairs
- Dean's Council
- Faculty Senate
- Academic Advising
- Academic Technology Services
- Admissions
- Athletics
- Career Services
- Center for Academic Achievement
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Dean of Students Office
- Financial Aid
- Jordan Center
- Learning Support
- Office of Planning and Decision Support
- Office of the Provost
- Student Life and Enrollment

SUB-GROUPS

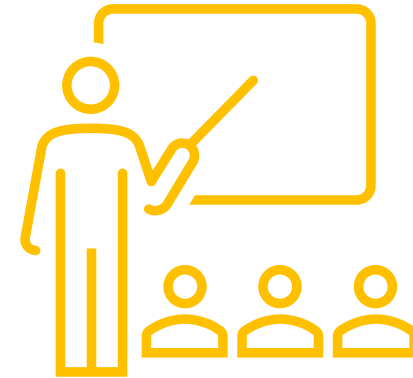


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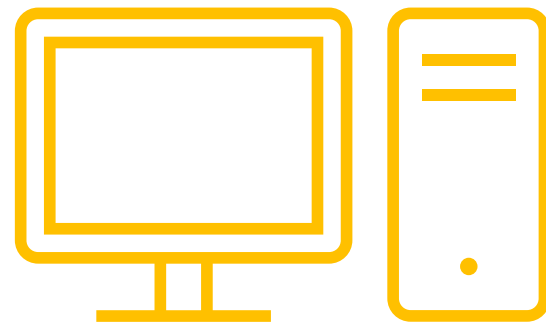
STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS SUB-GROUPS



Degree Progression



First-Year Student
Academic Experience



Online Learning
Experience



Undecided Students



DEGREE PROGRESSION (FOCUS ON DFW RATES)



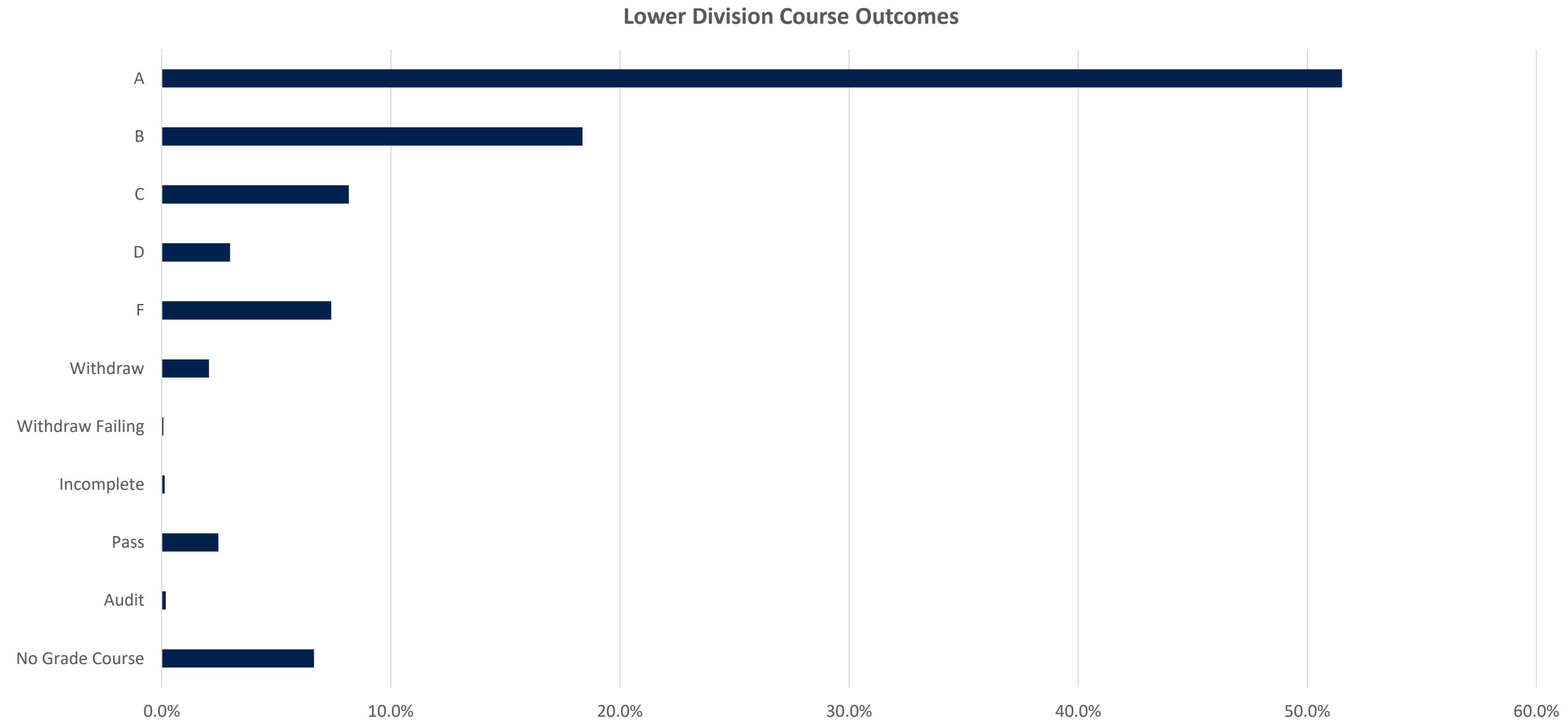
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DEGREE PROGRESSION TOPIC IDEAS

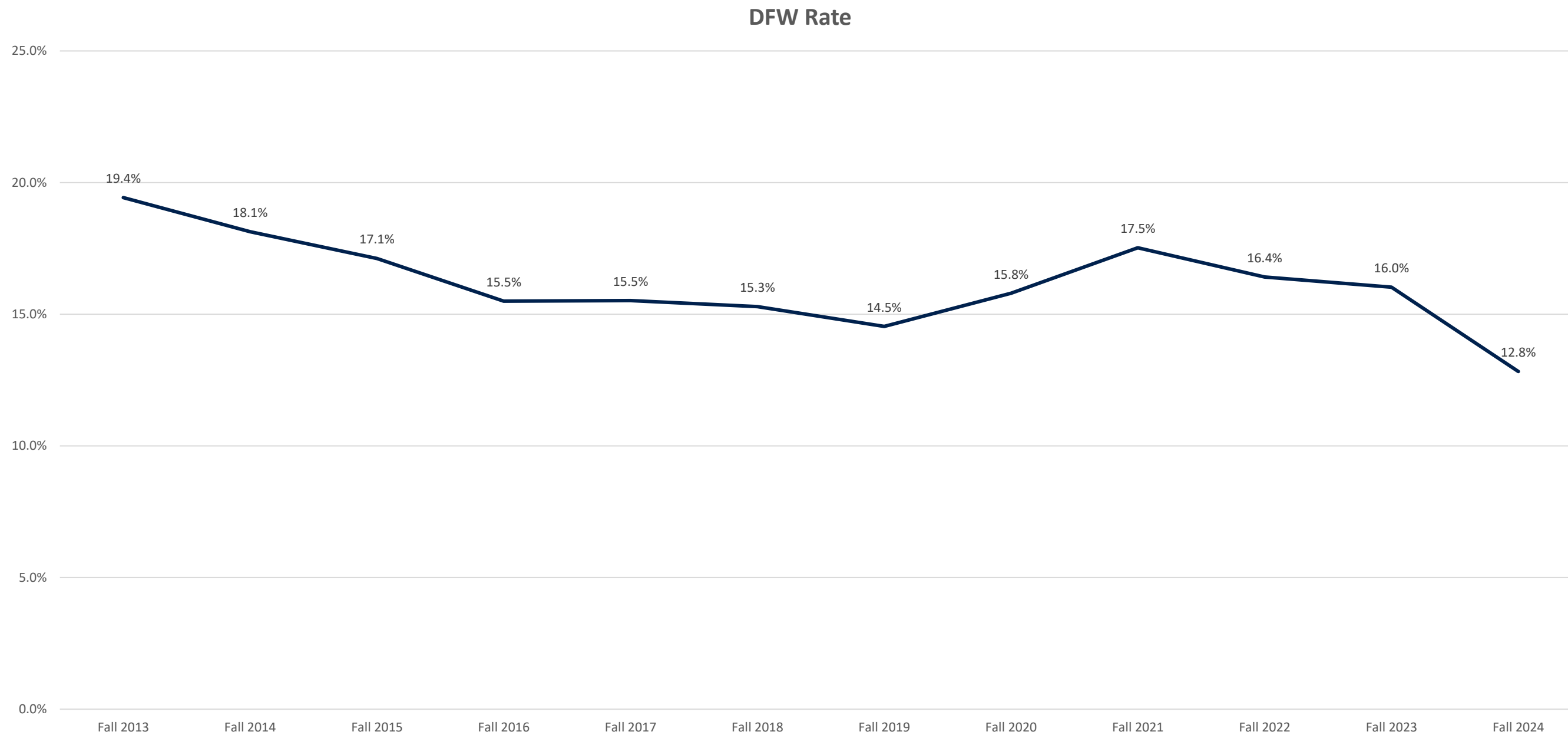
- 1) Identify and mitigate institutional **barriers** to degree progression.
- 2) **Identify high-challenge courses** and points of academic difficulty across disciplines.
- 3) Look at **high-enrollment, high-failure** courses and what resources are needed.
- 4) Improve student **course completion rates** across the institution (lower DFWs) via targeted resources and supports.
- 5) Increase awareness and use of **academic support services** (CTE, CFAA, etc.)
- 6) Consider what **support** is missing/needed.
- 7) Ensure student voice is brought in and informs recommendations.



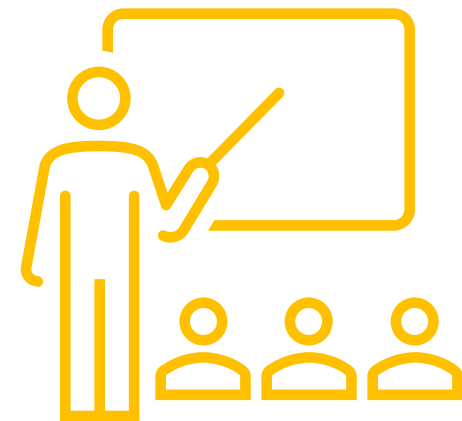
2024-25 LOWER DIVISION COURSE GRADE DISTRIBUTION



DFW RATE OF LOWER DIVISION COURSES



FIRST YEAR STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE



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FIRST YEAR STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE TOPIC IDEAS

- 1) Consider as **first-year enrollment continues to grow**, what resources and support need to grow with it?
- 2) Identify and mitigate institutional **barriers** to Student Academic Success for first-year students.
- 3) Examine best use of data that we have, such as **mid-term** data, and what **data** do we need?
- 4) Consider **class size** for courses typically geared towards first-year students.
- 5) Examine **FYE** course experience and what skills should be embedded, such as ETSU1020 and similar courses.
- 6) Increase awareness of and use of **institutional resources** (i.e., Sherrod, CFAA, Academic Advising, Learning Support, Jordan Center, etc.)
- 7) Consider how to best embed **high impact practices** in first-year courses.
- 8) Work with Undecided Student group to examine how first-year students consider **major choice** and how we promote early **career exploration**.

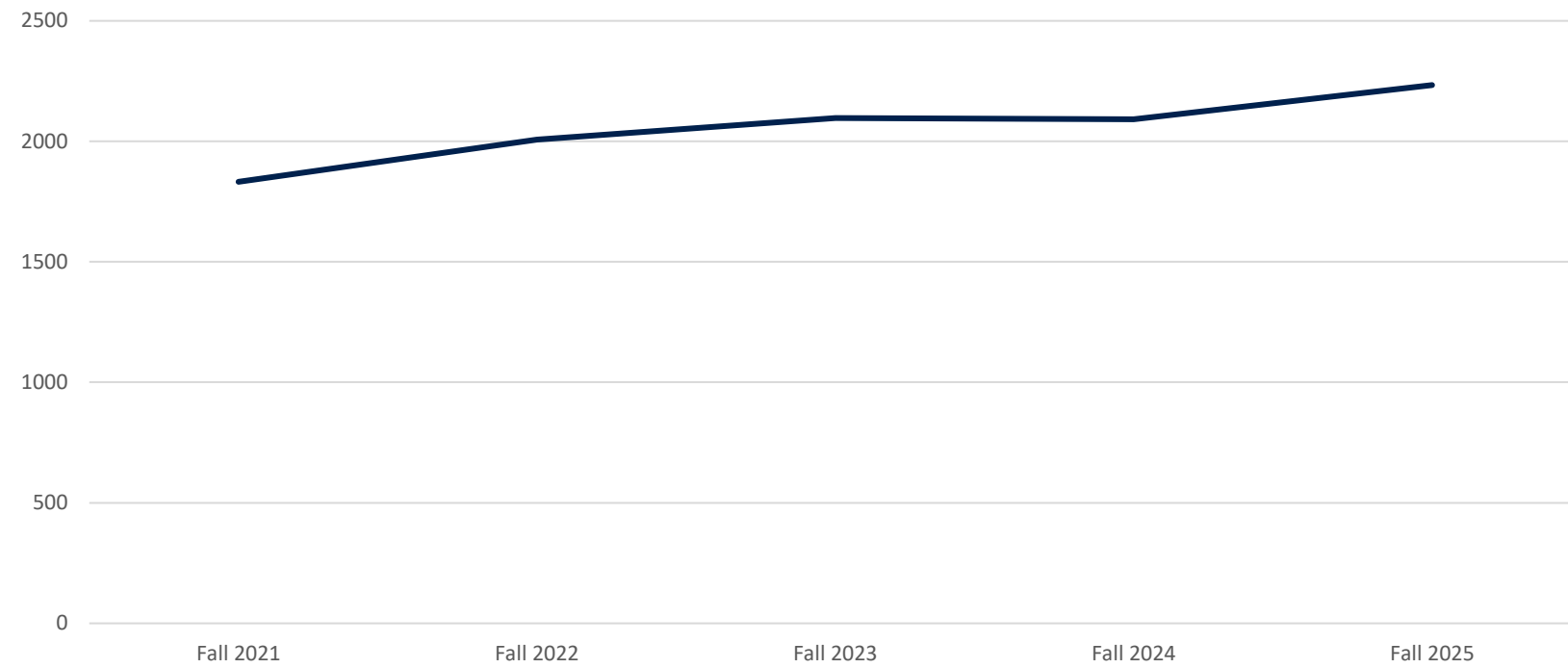


FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN

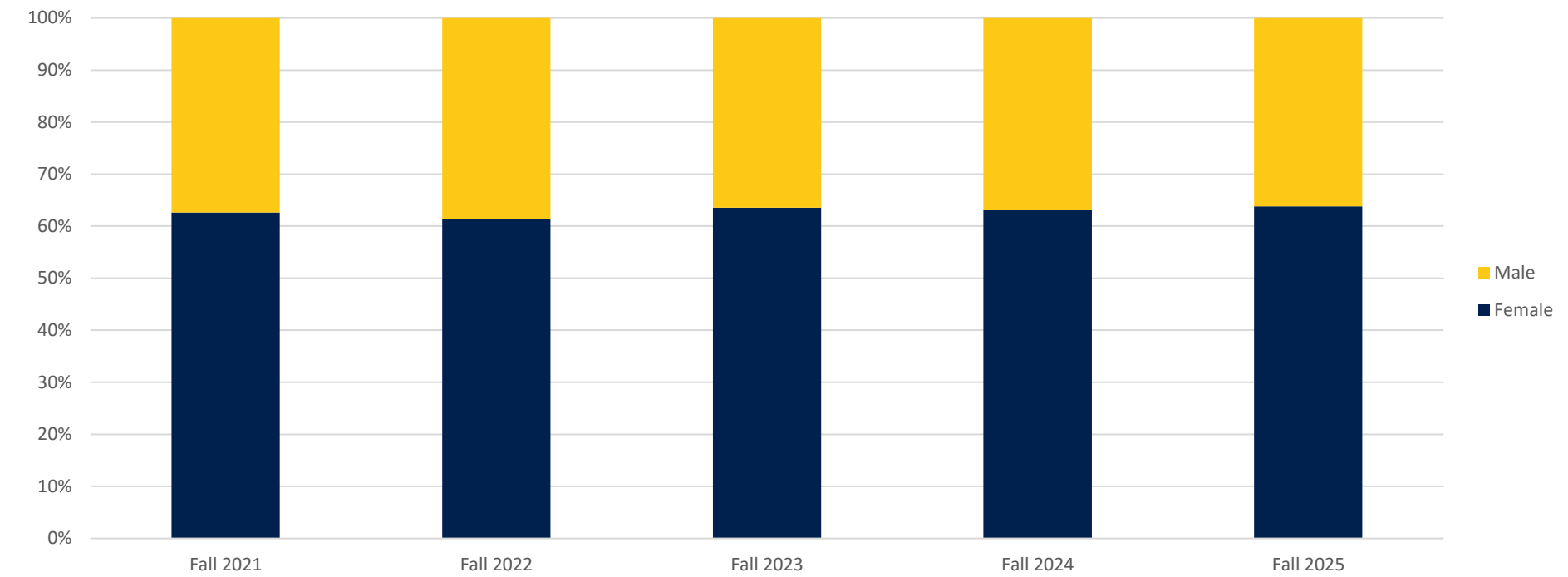


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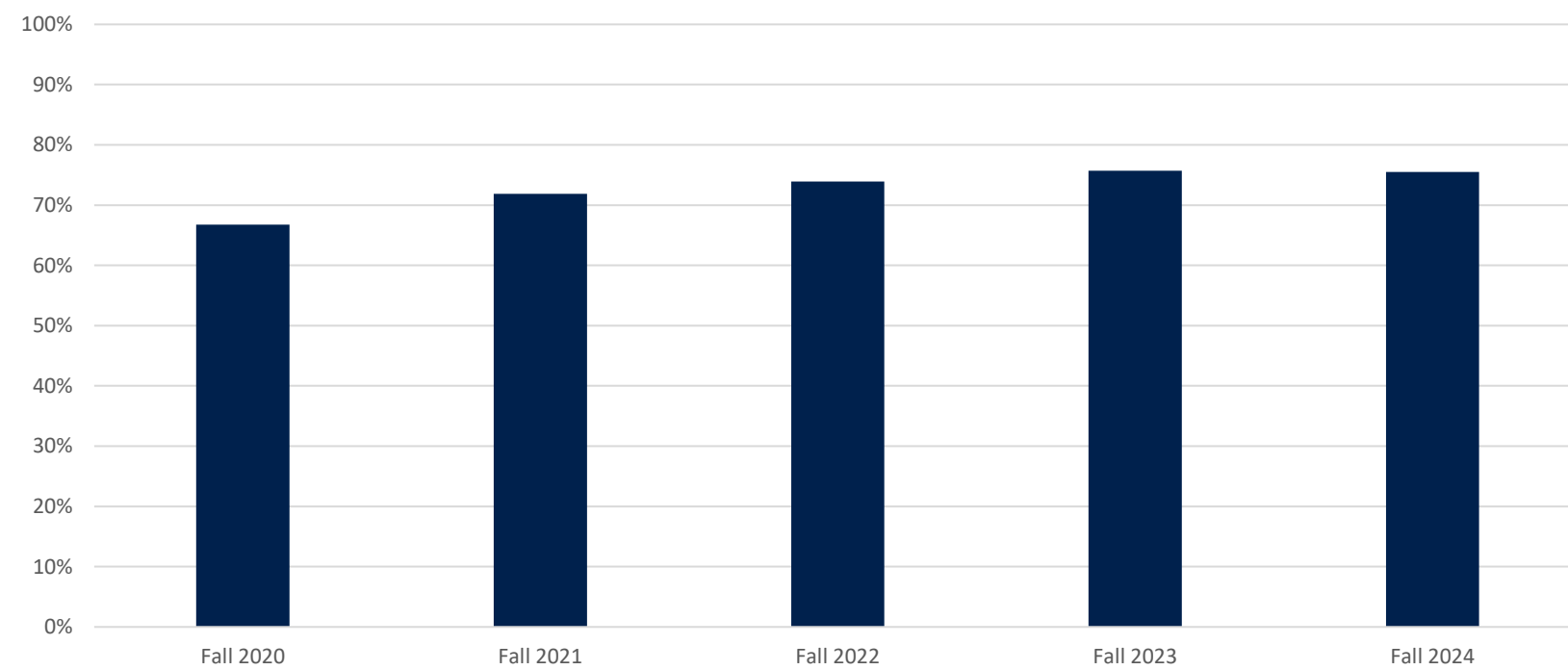
First-time, Full-time Freshmen Headcount



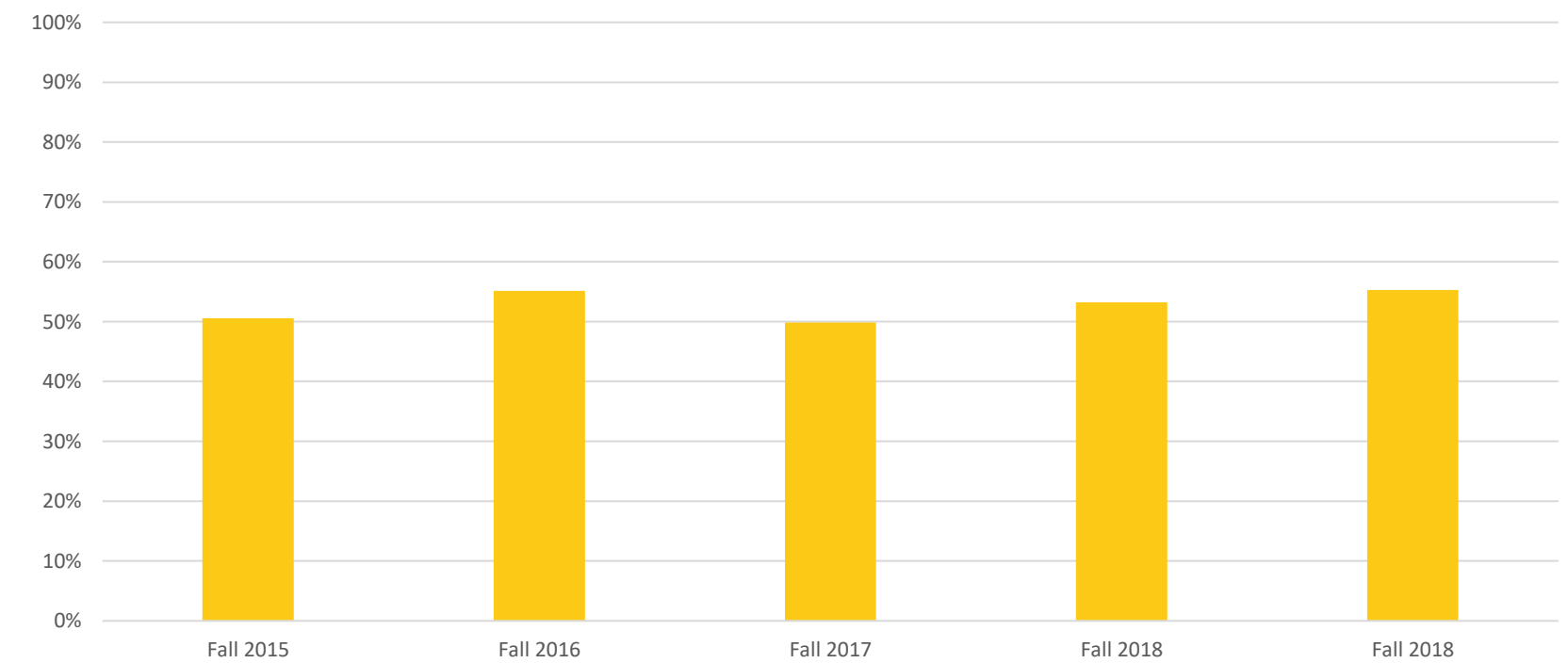
Gender of First-time, Full-time Freshmen



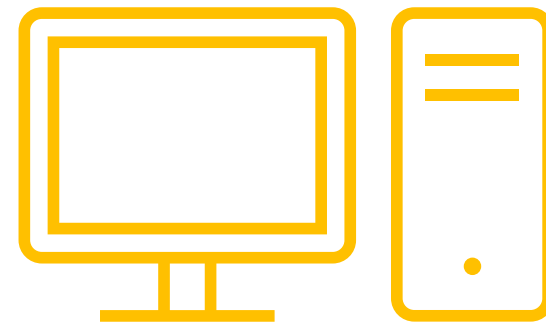
Fall-to-Fall Retention



6-Year Graduation Rate



ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE



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ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE TOPIC IDEAS

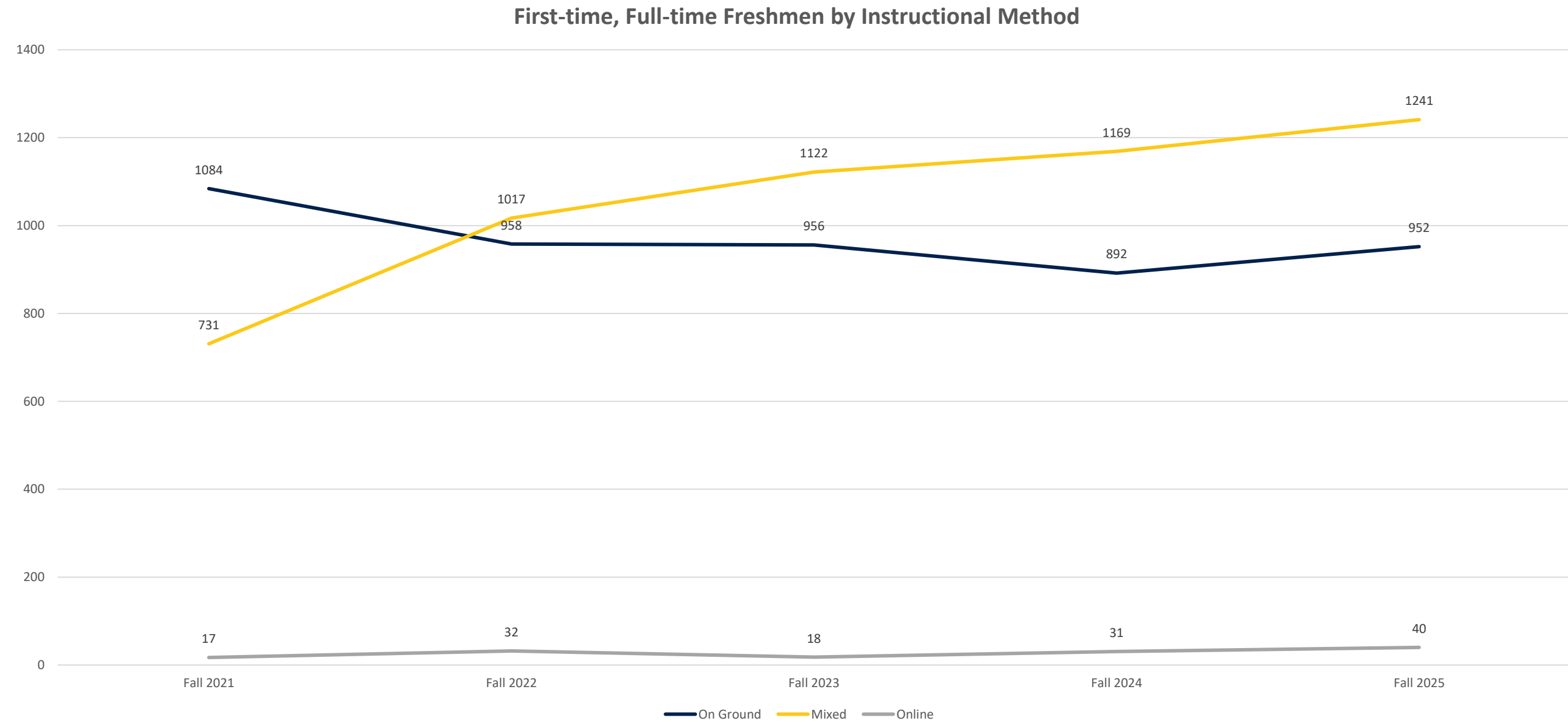
- 1) Consider what unique **challenges** impact virtual student academic success.
- 2) Examine how to bolster **student engagement** in online courses.
- 3) Consider if there is a **right number** of online versus in-person courses.
- 4) Examine undergraduate **student desire for online classes vs. in-person classes.**
How do we strike the balance?
- 5) Consider what **workshops** should be offered for faculty teaching hybrid or fully online courses.
- 6) Consider how in-person **resources** can best be made available to online students (i.e., CFAA, Sherrod, Jordan Center, etc.)
- 7) Examine online fee structure and policies.
- 8) Consider what **support and data** is missing/needed.

Thank you to Whitney Oliver for leading this sub-group.

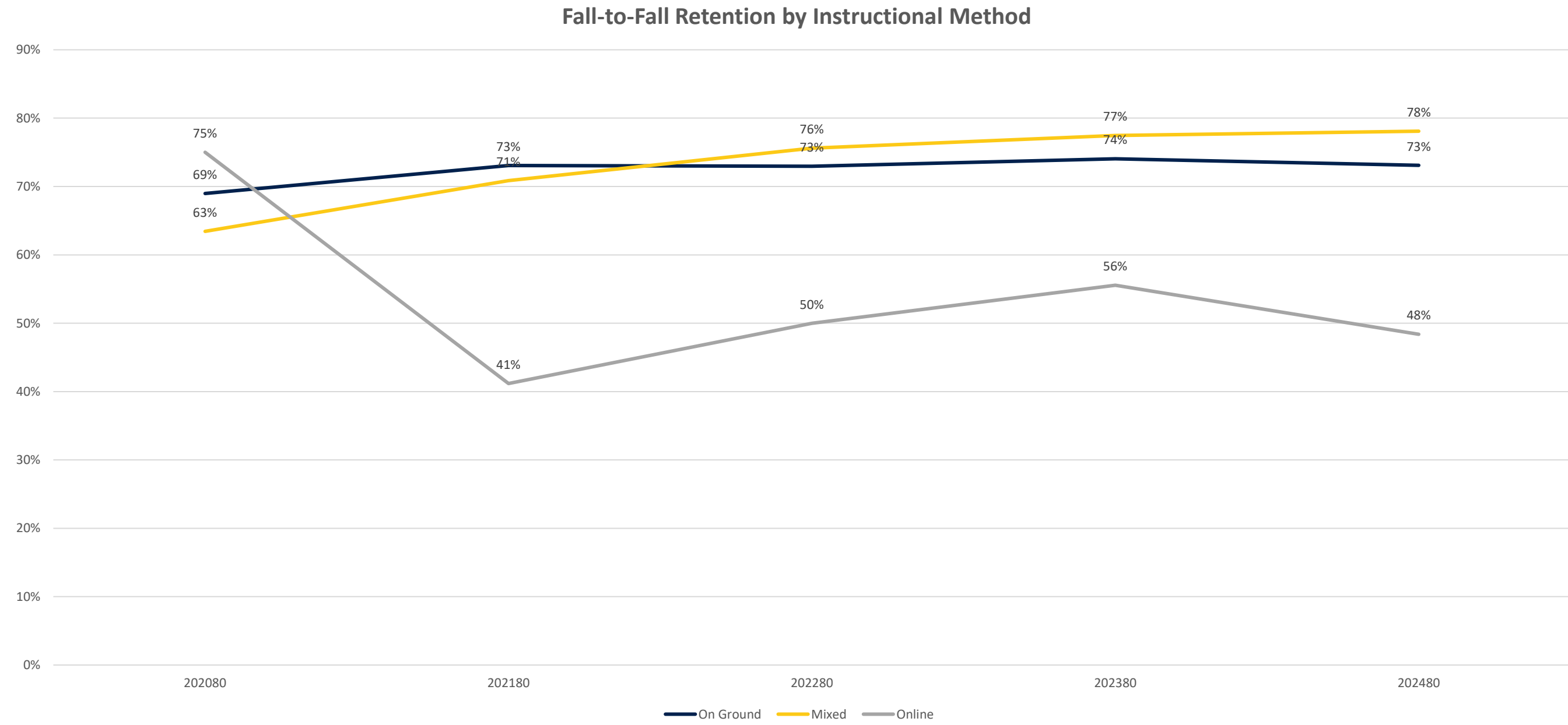


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FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME ONLINE FRESHMEN



FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME ONLINE FRESHMEN



UNDECIDED STUDENTS



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UNDECIDED STUDENTS TOPIC IDEAS

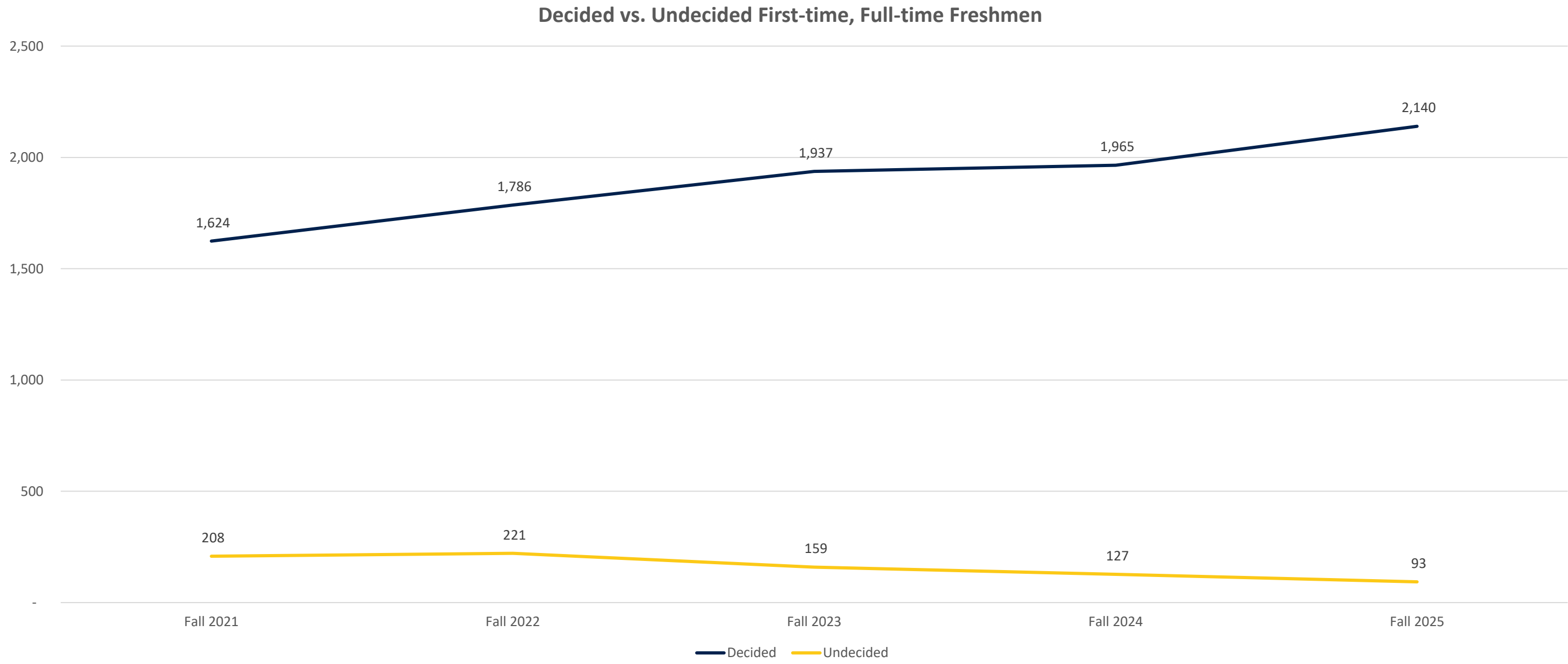
- 1) Consider how to **promote early major and career exploration**.
- 2) Explore **major-change** frequency across ETSU.
- 3) Examine how to **promote various career options to students**, especially for those in highly competitive fields.
- 4) Consider what **support for undecided students** is missing/needed.
- 5) Consider how to best embed major and career exploration in **FYE courses**.
- 6) Explore **where students get information** about career options, both in-person and online.
- 7) Consider how to bolster **prospective ETSU students'** knowledge of the majors we offer and the careers they lead to.

Thank you to Dr. Amber Arsenault for leading this sub-group.

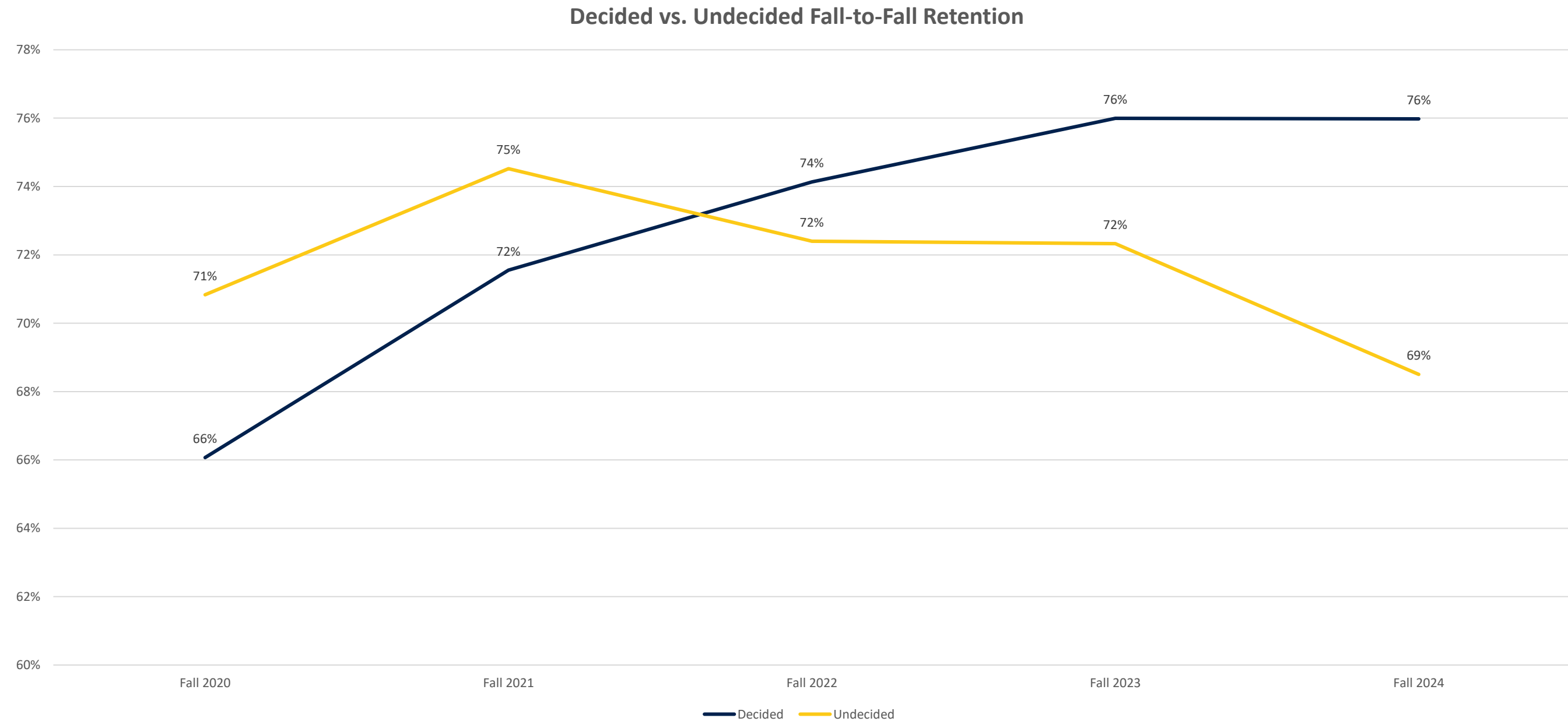


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FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME UNDECIDED FRESHMEN



FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME UNDECIDED FRESHMEN



REQUESTED DELIVERABLES

1. Process Overview

Brief description of how the sub-group conducted its work.

2. Consultation Summary

Who was consulted (students, units, offices) and why.

3. Resources Used to Inform

Data, peer comparisons, research, materials, and other resources used.

4. Key Findings

What is working well, challenges, gaps, and emerging needs.

5. Recommendations

Clear, actionable, prioritized recommendations with notes on feasibility and needed supports.



THANK YOU

Jessie Wang

Provost Fellow for Student Academic Success
Assistant Dean for Student Success & Access, CCEHD

Wangjk@etsu.edu

Thank you to Joe Chappell, and the Office of Planning and Decision Support for providing the data used in this presentation.



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Staff Senate President's Report

March 9, 2026

Updates from Meeting with Dr. Noland

Staff Senate leadership continues to meet with President Noland to maintain open dialogue between university administration and staff representatives. Current discussions have focused on reviewing the results of the **Hopes, Aspirations, and Dreams Survey** and identifying potential next steps based on themes that have emerged from the data.

Dr. Noland has expressed appreciation for Staff Senate's engagement in these discussions and for the perspective staff bring to these conversations. He has also accepted an invitation to attend and speak at the **April Staff Senate meeting**, where he will provide additional updates and engage with senators.

University Council Highlights (March 9)

Festival of Ideas

- The **Festival of Ideas** was highlighted as a successful campus-wide event this year.
- Special recognition was given to **Joy** for organizing the **Café Curiosity** event.
- The program featured **27 students presenting essays in a format inspired by author John Green**, creating an open reading environment for students to share ideas and creative work.
- The event was very well received by attendees and is expected to return as part of next year's programming.

Faculty Senate

- The **faculty climate survey** recently closed with **more than 4,000 responses**, indicating strong participation across the university.
- The **Executive Council of Chairs**, led by **Sarah Thomason**, continues work examining the role of department chairs and evaluating processes related to chair responsibilities and evaluation.

Student Government Association

- **SGA elections** are underway, with many students running for leadership positions across the organization.
- The **State of the Student Body Address** will be held soon.
- Student leaders are also preparing programming for the upcoming **Civility Week**, which focuses on promoting respectful dialogue and community engagement on campus.

Athletics

- **ETSU Softball** recently secured a win in competition.
- **Women's Basketball** had a strong season:
 - Finished as **regular season champions**
 - Advanced to the **conference semifinals**
- **Men's Basketball** is competing in the **conference championship game this evening**.

Information Technology Services

- An **internal ITS Change Management Audit** was recently completed and returned **zero findings**, reflecting strong internal controls and processes.
- Campus **Wi-Fi infrastructure** has expanded significantly, with **47% more access points installed**, improving connectivity across campus.
- **Cybersecurity training** for employees is scheduled to launch **Fall 2026** as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen data protection and security awareness.
- ITS continues to work closely with the **Voyager Task Force** to address system improvements and user experience concerns related to the HR and payroll platform.

Financial Aid Federal Policy Updates

Significant **federal financial aid policy changes** will take effect **July 1, 2026**, requiring adjustments to institutional processes and student communication.

Key changes include:

- **Pell Grant eligibility adjustments** tied to the new **Student Aid Index (SAI)** calculations.
- **Graduate PLUS loans** will be discontinued for **new borrowers beginning in 2026**.
- **New borrowing caps** will be implemented for both **Graduate and Parent PLUS loans**.
- **Loan proration changes** will adjust aid based on a student's actual enrollment level.

The **Financial Aid Office** is currently developing communication materials and student-friendly examples to help explain these changes. Updated **financial aid packages are expected to begin reprocessing in May**.

Ellucian Student Information System Project

ETSU is beginning the transition to a new **Student-First Information System** through Ellucian.

Project goals include:

- Improved **reporting and data access**
- More **intuitive user systems**
- Increased **automation of key administrative processes**

Key timeline points:

- **Project kickoff:** March 24–25
- **Implementation timeline:** Approximately **18 months**
- **Target launch:** **Fall 2027**

This project represents a significant long-term investment in improving campus systems that support student services and administrative operations.

Legislative & Budget Updates

- The **Tennessee legislative session** is ongoing. At this time, most proposed legislation is expected to have **limited direct impact on ETSU**.
- **Tenure-related legislation** is currently moving through the **State Senate**.
- The **state budget outlook** is projected to be somewhat **lean**, which may limit new funding allocations.

- ETSU is currently planning budgets assuming **stable enrollment levels**.
- If additional funding becomes available, leadership has indicated that **faculty and staff salary enhancements** would likely be a priority.
- A proposed **tuition increase of 2–4%** will go before the **Board of Trustees later this month**.
- **Campus budget hearings** are scheduled for **mid-April**.

Campus Notes

- Appreciation was shared for the organizers of **ETSU Con**, which was reported to be a very successful campus event.
- **Spring Break** begins next week for students.
- During President Noland's upcoming travel, **Dr. McCorkle will serve as acting president**.

In Memoriam

University leadership shared remembrance of **former ETSU President Stanton**, recognizing his lasting impact on the institution. During his tenure, he oversaw development of several important initiatives and facilities, including:

- **Governor's Hall**
- **Centennial Hall**
- The **Roan Scholars Program**
- Expansion of the **Honors Program**

A **Celebration of Life service** will be held **April 10 at Munsey Memorial** to honor his contributions to the university and the region.