

Educational Approval Program

2021 Student Outcomes Report

State of Wisconsin | Department of Safety and Professional Services | DSPS

May 2023

Introduction

EAP Overview

The Educational Approval Program (EAP) was created in order to protect Wisconsin's consumers and support quality educational options. The EAP approves and supervises private, postsecondary schools that offer occupational training and educational programs to residents. Under s.440.52 (2), Wis. Stats., "[t]he department shall protect the general public by inspecting and approving private trade, correspondence, business and technical schools doing business within this state whether located within or outside this state..."

Although the current statutory definition of a school includes "private trade, correspondence, business and technical schools," an up-to-date set of school descriptors to adequately cover the scope of the EAP's approval includes "technical, career, distance-learning, and degree-granting schools." Under SPS 401.01 (23), a school is defined as "any person, located within or outside this state, maintaining advertising or conducting a program for profit or a tuition charge not exempted..."

In general, the EAP oversees for-profit, postsecondary schools; out-of-state non-profit colleges and universities; and in-state non-profit institutions incorporated after 01/01/1992.

As explained in Wis. Stat §. 440.52(1)(e), schools mainly supported by taxes (i.e., the University of Wisconsin system), schools of a parochial or denominational character offering courses having a sectarian objective, and schools primarily offering instruction avocational or recreational in nature and not leading to a vocational objective are exempt from EAP approval.

In 2016, Wisconsin became a member of NC-SARA, the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement. As members, participating states (all states except California) recognize the

regulations of the home state for postsecondary distance learning. Because of this, many distance learning schools became exempt from the scope of this report and its historical data.

Methodology

The standard cohort year runs from July 1 through the following June 30, although schools are permitted to use an alternative 12-month period that is more compatible with their program structure [Table 1]. This alternative period may be the calendar year, a fiscal year, or something else. A cohort is made up of all students that start a particular program during the cohort year.

The only requirement is that schools do not vary from their chosen cohort period in order to keep reporting as consistent as possible. The EAP’s student outcomes data set contains cohort start years dating back to 2012 with the Educational Approval Board (EAB). 2018 marks the first full cohort reporting period with the EAP. Students enrolling in a new cohort period are defined as “new starts” (NS), “transfers in” (TI) or “transfers from” (TF). NS describes students entering the cohort for the first time and are typically the largest body of a

Table 1 – Cohort Reporting Periods

Cohort Year	Typical	Calendar
2012	7/1/12 — 6/30/12	1/1/12 — 12/31/13
2013	7/1/13 — 6/30/14	1/1/13 — 12/31/14
2014	7/1/14 — 6/30/15	1/1/14 — 12/31/15
2015	7/1/15 — 6/30/16	1/1/15 — 12/31/16
2016	7/1/16 — 6/30/17	1/1/16 — 12/31/17
2017	7/1/17 — 6/30/18	1/1/17 — 12/31/18
2018	7/1/18 — 6/30/19	1/1/18 — 12/31/19
2019	7/1/19 — 6/30/20	1/1/19 — 12/31/20
2020	7/1/20 — 6/30/21	1/1/20 — 12/31/21
2021	7/1/21 — 6/30/22	1/1/21 — 12/31/22

new cohort. TI describes students that were enrolled in another school before transferring to a

program offered by an EAP approved school for the current cohort. TF describes students that were already enrolled in the school but changed their program for the reported school year.

No new students are added to a cohort in following years, but the status of those continuing from each prior year are reported at the end of each renewal cycle. All students in their second year or later are classified as Previous Year Continuing (PYC).

Institutions report the status of students after their first year in one of five output categories.

“Drop/Withdraw” (DW) classifies students who either voluntarily withdrew from the program or met their school’s criteria for an involuntary drop; “Completed” (CP) classifies students who have met their school’s required hours, grades, and any other requirements specified by the school in the EAP approved catalog and completed their program; “Continuing Next Year” classifies students who are continuing the program and will be classified as PYC at the start of the next reporting year; “Transfer Out” (TO) refers to students that leave the school for another; and “Transfer To” (TT) classifies students that will be starting another program at the same school. Student outcomes data from a given cohort is reported each year until all students have completed, dropped, or transferred from the program.

The following formulas explain how the percentages in this report are calculated.

$$\textit{Drop Rate} = DW / (NS+TI+TF+PYC) \times 100$$

$$\textit{Completion Rate} = CP / (NS+TI+TF+PYC) \times 100$$

$$\textit{Continuing Next Year} = CNY / (NS+TI+TF+PYC) \times 100$$

Schools are approved on the basis of their programs – organized units of subject matter in which instruction is offered within a given time and which leads to a certificate or degree. There are six (6) different types of certificate/degree programs generally offered by post-secondary schools that will be referenced throughout this report.

Certificates (CER) and diplomas (DIP) are non-degree offers below the associate degree. They are most often offered in technical and vocational fields of study, and generally lead to employment in an occupational field. Examples include a CER in Office Administration Bookkeeping or a DIP in Dental Assisting.

Associate degrees (AA) are broken into two types. 1.) A technological and vocational specialty that is generally completed in two years of college study. These are usually sufficient for entrance into an occupational field. 2.) College or university parallel programs that are similar to the first two years of a four-year college curriculum, referred to as a Transfer Degree. Examples include an AA in Accounting.

Bachelor's or baccalaureate degrees generally require four to five years of study. The two most common are the Bachelor of Arts (BA) and the Bachelor of Science (BS). A BS is more likely to be awarded in the sciences or for professional or technical fields of study, whereas a BA is more likely to be awarded for the humanities and arts. Both, however, include general education courses, a major and electives, and there are no absolute differences between the degrees.

Master's degrees, broken into Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Science (MS) programs usually take one to two academic years beyond a bachelor's degree to complete and are the customary first graduate degrees in the liberal arts and sciences.

Doctorate degrees usually require course work and independent research culminating in a dissertation or formal presentation of the results of the independent study. Doctoral students must have received a bachelor’s degree prior to obtaining their doctorate degree.

As a result of the constant fluctuation in the number of EAP approved schools at a given time, the data reported in this Student Outcomes Report includes all data reported by schools by the 2023 renewal deadline of December 31, 2022, regardless of if that school has since closed or become exempt from EAP oversight.

Cohort Data

All Cohorts: 2012 — 2021

In the 2021 reporting year, there were a total of 12,180 students attending 135 EAP regulated schools. Across all schools and degree levels the drop rate was 21.33%, the completion rate was 31.35% and 43.18% of all students were reported to be continuing next year [Table 2].

Table 2 — All Cohorts, 2021 Reporting Year

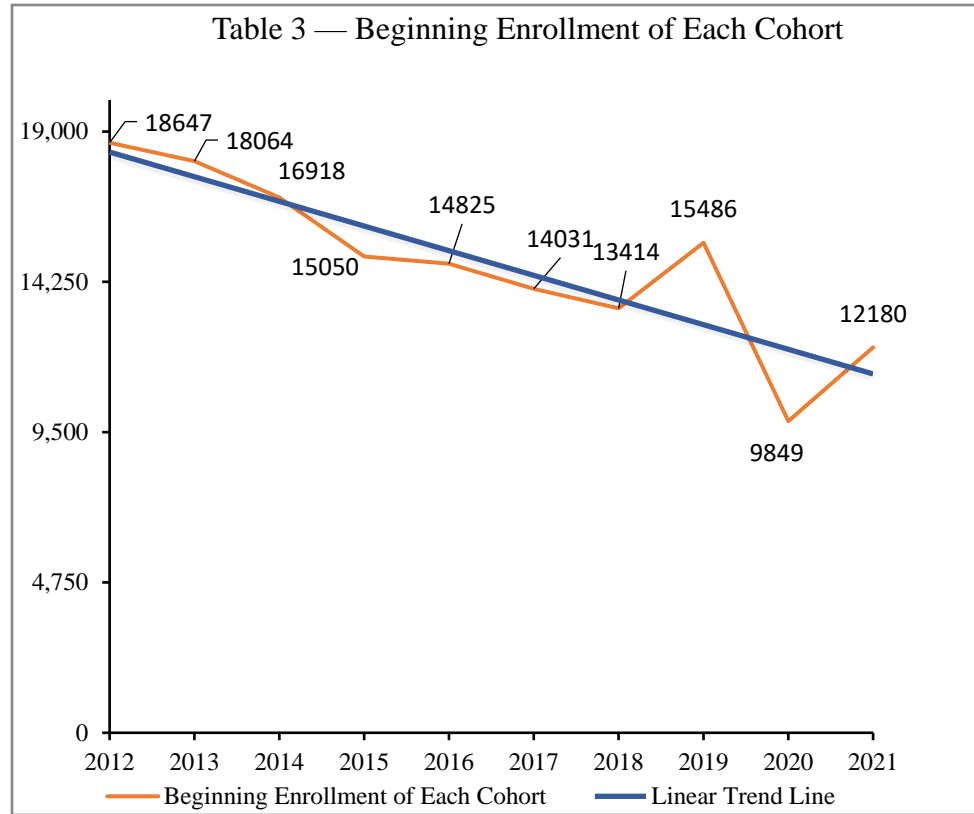
Total Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
12,180	21.33%	31.35%	43.18%

Although this marks a 23.67% increase from last reporting year’s enrollment and a sign of improvements following the Covid-19 pandemic, it is still a part of the general decline in enrollment numbers dating back to 2012 [Table 3].

Since 2012, enrollment at EAP approved schools has declined by 34% overall with an average yearly decline of 3.23%. Given the anomalies in 2019 and 2020 overlapping with the Covid-19

pandemic (see Table 1 for cohort reporting periods), it is likely that this year's increase marks a return to the general trend in declining enrollments.

At the cohort level, over 75% of all



students in EAP approved programs in 2021 were part of the 2021 or 2020 cohorts and only 1.25% were part of the 2012 to 2016 cohorts [Table 4]. Because of this, individual cohort analysis will focus on the reported data for the 2017 — 2021 cohorts. Drop, completion and continuing next year rates all remained relatively consistent for students between the 2021, 2020 and 2019 cohorts.

Table 4 – 2021 Outcomes Data by Cohort

Cohort	Year	Number of Students	% of Student Body	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
2021	1	6,522	53.55%	21.56%	35.37%	40.05%
2020	2	2,995	24.59%	25.41%	27.35%	40.57%
2019	3	1,504	12.35%	22.47%	31.52%	40.69%
2018	4	640	5.25%	10.47%	23.44%	63.44%
2017	5	367	3.01%	3.54%	11.99%	83.65%
2016	6	101	0.83%	5.94%	15.84%	75.25%
2015	7	28	0.23%	14.29%	25.00%	60.71%
2014	8	12	0.10%	8.33%	8.33%	66.67%
2013	9	9	0.07%	22.22%	11.11%	66.67%
2012	10	2	0.02%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Diploma/certificate programs continued to be the largest degree level in EAP approved schools, with 43.19% of all students enrolled in 2021 [Table 5]. With their typically short timeframe, they continue to show the highest completion percentage and lowest percentage of continuing students of any degree level.

Table 5 – 2021 Outcomes Data by Degree Level

Degree Level	Number of Students	% of Total	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Diploma/Certificate	5,261	43.19%	21.69%	51.19%	24.94%
Associates	3,864	31.72%	22.49%	15.45%	56.21%
Bachelor's	1,935	15.89%	18.91%	16.28%	57.93%
Master's	965	7.92%	20.52%	20.52%	56.58%
Doctorate	155	1.27%	15.48%	10.32%	69.68%

Students in associate degree programs made up nearly 32 percent of all EAP students and had the highest drop rate of any degree level with 22.49% of students dropping out of the program in 2021. Looking to pre-Covid cohorts (2018 and 2019), this marked a significant increase in the

percentage of students in associate programs. In 2018 and 2019, 16% and 21% of total students respectively were in associate programs.

2021 Cohort — Year 1

Students making up the 2021 Cohort were first year students during the 2021 EAP school year.

In total, 6,522 students made up the 2021 Cohort. The combined drop rate was 21.56%, the completion rate was 35.37% and 40.05% are continuing their program to next year [Table 6].

Table 6 – 2021 Cohort – Year 1

Total Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
6,522	21.56%	35.37%	40.05%

Breaking down the 2021 Cohort by degree level, diploma/certificate programs made up nearly 60% of the cohort, associate’s another 25%, and bachelor’s an additional 11%. Master’s and Doctorate programs made up less than 5% of the total cohort. As anticipated, the percentage continuing rates match up with the length of program, with 57% of diploma/certificate students completing the program in their first year [Table 7]. The drop rate for associate degree students was noticeably higher than other degree levels, with 29.94% dropping in the first year – nearly 10% higher than the bachelor’s degree level. Although higher than other levels in 2021, the drop rate for associate programs was 2% lower than pre-Covid. This outlier comes more from a decrease in the drop percentage of other programs rather than an increase for the associate level.

Table 7 – 2021 Cohort – Year 1 by Degree Level

Degree Level	Number of Students	% of Total	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Diploma/Certificate	3,873	59.38%	19.00%	57.42%	21.56%
Associates	1,610	24.69%	29.94%	2.61%	60.87%
Bachelor's	738	11.32%	20.73%	2.17%	72.49%
Master's	264	4.05%	10.61%	7.95%	80.68%
Doctorate	37	0.57%	16.21%	10.81%	72.97%

Year 1 Comparison

Comparing first-year outcomes for students enrolled in EAP schools since 2016, numbers have been remarkably stable overall [Table 8].

Table 8 – Year 1 Outcomes Comparison

Year 1	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
2016	9,303	24%	37%	39%
2017	9,022	22%	38%	38%
2018	9,665	22%	37%	39%
2019	9,485	22%	37%	40%
2020	4,906	22%	13%	61%
2021	6,522	22%	35%	40%

The drop rate has remained around 22%, the completion percentage around 36% and the percentage continuing next year around 40%. The one exception was year 1 of the 2020 cohort, likely due to challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic. Student enrollment numbers fell by over 4,500, the completion percentage fell to 13% and the percentage continuing next year increased to over 61%. As with overall enrollment numbers, year 1 of the 2021 cohort saw a gradual increase back towards pre-Covid numbers. The biggest question going forward will be if this is just a temporary increase, or if enrollment numbers will return to pre-2019 cohort levels.

2020 Cohort — Year 2

Students making up the 2020 Cohort were in their second year during the 2021 EAP school year. There were 2,995 students reported remaining from the 2020 Cohort [Table 9]. In year 2, the drop rate increased from 21.81% to 25.41%. The completion percentage increased from 12.64% in year 1, to 27.35% in year 2 and the percentage continuing next year decreased from 61.05% to 40.57%. In total, after the first two years the cohort has had an overall drop rate of 37.32% and an overall completion rate of 29.33%. When considering large changes in the 2020 Cohort's

outcomes, it is important to remember that this is the cohort with the smallest starting enrollment population with most students entering amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 9 – 2020 Cohort – Year 1 & 2

Time Period	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Year 1	4,906	21.81%	12.64%	61.05%
Year 2	2,995	25.41%	27.35%	40.57%
Total	4,906	37.32%	29.33%	x

Breaking the cohort down by degree level, associate degree programs were the largest remaining of the 2020 Cohort, with 38.40% of students. Diploma/certificate programs had both the highest drop percentage at 27.60% and highest completion percentage at 43.82%. Doctorate programs had the highest percentage of students continuing the next year, with 75% of the 36 remaining students continuing [Table 10].

Table 10 – 2020 Cohort – Year 2 by Degree Level

Degree Level	Number of Students	% of Total	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Diploma/Certificate	931	31.09%	27.60%	43.82%	24.49%
Associates	1,150	38.40%	26.87%	25.57%	39.74%
Bachelor's	583	19.47%	23.50%	10.81%	55.06%
Master's	295	9.85%	17.63%	17.63%	61.69%
Doctorate	36	1.20%	16.67%	5.56%	75.00%

Comparing the 2020 Cohort to second year outcomes data from 2016—2019 gives a view of how the 2020 Cohort is performing relative to students from other cohorts at the same time. Overall, compared to previous years, the 2020 cohort has had mixed returns. A drop percentage of 25% in year 2 puts them in the middle ground compared to their peers. The completion percentage of 27% and the percentage continuing to a third year of 41% are both the second lowest for any cohort in year 2 from 2016—2019 [Table 11].

Table 11 – Year 2 Outcomes Comparison

Year 2	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
2016	3,616	28%	32%	40%
2017	3,453	26%	28%	45%
2018	3,749	23%	33%	42%
2019	2,937	19%	22%	51%
2020	2,995	25%	27%	41%

2019 Cohort — Year 3

There were 1,504 students in their third year of the 2019 Cohort during the 2021 EAP school year. Like most cohorts, the 2019 Cohort saw a spike in the percentage continuing next year in 2020, which then fell back to previous levels in year 3. Between 2020 and 2021, the drop rate increased by 3% and the completion rate increased by 10%. After three years, the cohort has seen an overall drop rate of 31% and an overall completion rate of 48% [Table 12].

Table 12 – 2019 Cohort – Years 1 & 2 & 3

Time Period	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Year 1	9,485	22%	37%	40%
Year 2	2,937	19%	22%	51%
Year 3	1,504	22%	32%	41%
Total	9,485	31%	48%	x

Similarly to the 2020 Cohort, the largest remaining group of the 2019 Cohort is associate degree students – making up 36.64% of remaining students. Nearly 43% of associate degree students completed their program in 2021, the highest of any degree level. Diploma/certificate programs saw the highest drop rate at 43.54% in their third year [Table 13].

Table 13 – 2019 Cohort – Year 3 by Degree Level

Degree Level	Number of Students	% of Total	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Diploma/Certificate	271	18.02%	43.54%	17.71%	30.63%
Associates	551	36.64%	11.98%	42.83%	42.11%
Bachelor's	391	26.00%	15.09%	33.25%	44.25%
Master's	263	17.49%	34.60%	22.43%	39.54%
Doctorate	28	1.86%	14.29%	3.57%	71.43%

Comparing the 2019 Cohort to year 3 outcomes data for cohorts between 2016—2018 shows that although student numbers and drop percentage are most comparable to 2016 and 2017, the completion percentage for year 3 of the 2019 cohort is only 32% -- just barely above the 2018 cohort's anomalously low 31% and 5%-10% lower than year 3 results from 2016 and 2017 [Table 14].

Table 14 – Year 3 Outcomes Comparison

Year 3	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
2016	1,452	27%	40%	31%
2017	1,556	22%	37%	40%
2018	1,291	14%	31%	51%
2019	1,504	22%	32%	41%

2018 Cohort — Year 4

In the fourth year of the 2018 Cohort, the total number of students enrolled was down over 50% from year three, with 640 students remaining. Out of those students, the drop rate was down to only 10%, the completion rate was 23% and the percentage continuing next year was 63% [Table 13]. Overall, through four years the cohort has had a 25% drop rate and a 43% completion rate.

Table 15 – 2018 Cohort Years 1 & 2 & 3 & 4

Time Period	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Year 1	9,665	22%	37%	39%
Year 2	3,749	23%	33%	42%
Year 3	1,291	14%	31%	51%
Year 4	640	10%	23%	63%
Total	9,665	25%	43%	x

A big reason for the low drop rate in year four comes from the breakdown by degree level [Table 16].

Table 16 – 2018 Cohort – Year 4 by Degree Level

Degree Level	Number of Students	% of Total	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Diploma/Certificate	121	18.91%	24.79%	8.26%	66.12%
Associates	268	41.88%	3.36%	8.58%	84.70%
Bachelor's	133	20.78%	7.52%	54.14%	35.34%
Master's	100	15.63%	15.00%	43.00%	39.00%
Doctorate	18	2.81%	16.67%	11.11%	72.22%

Only 3.36% of associate degree students and 7.52% of bachelor’s degree students dropped in year four. The vast majority, 84.70%, of associate degree students were reported to be continuing next year. Both bachelor’s and master’s degree students had significantly higher completion rates than any other degree level after four years, with 54.14% of bachelor’s students and 43% of master’s students completing their program.

Compared to the 2016 and 2017 cohorts in their fourth year, the 2018 cohort is noticeably larger in student population [Table 17]. Drop rate, completion rate percentage continuing next year are all relatively similar in performance to the 2017 cohort’s fourth year. Compared to the 2016 cohort’s fourth year, the 2018 cohort has a 16% lower drop percentage, a 12% lower completion percentage, and 24% higher percentage of students continuing to a fifth year.

Table 17 – Year 4 Outcomes Data Comparison

Year 4	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
2016	454	26%	35%	39%
2017	511	10%	16%	72%
2018	640	10%	23%	63%

2017 Cohort — Year 5

In the fifth year of the 2017 cohort, there were 367 students with a drop rate of 4%, a completion rate of 12% and 84% continuing next year [Table 18].

Table 18 – 2017 Cohort Years 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5

Time Period	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Year 1	9,022	22%	38%	38%
Year 2	3,453	26%	28%	45%
Year 3	1,556	22%	37%	40%
Year 4	511	10%	16%	72%
Year 5	367	4%	12%	84%
Total	9,022	48%	57%	x

Compared to previous years of the cohort, this was by far the lowest drop rate and completion rate. Broken down by degree level, this low drop and completion rate was driven mostly by diploma/certificate and associate degree programs [Table 19].

Table 19 – 2017 Cohort – Year 5 by Degree Level

Degree Level	Number of Students	% of Total	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
Diploma/Certificate	74	20.16%	0.00%	4.05%	94.59%
Associates	215	58.58%	0.47%	0.93%	98.60%
Bachelor's	40	10.90%	10.00%	50.00%	40.00%
Master's	28	7.63%	25.00%	57.14%	17.86%
Doctorate	10	2.72%	10.00%	30.00%	40.00%

Out of the 74 students in a diploma/certificate program, 0.00% were reported to have dropped and only 4.05% had completed the program. Nearly 95% of students were reported to be

continuing for a sixth year. Similarly for the associate degree level, out of the 215 students – 58.58% of the remaining 2017 cohort – only 0.47% dropped and 0.93% had completed the program. Nearly 99% of those remaining are reported to be continuing for another year.

Bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate programs all saw significantly higher completion percentages.

Compared to the 2016 cohort in its fifth year, across the board the 2017 cohort’s fifth year was extremely similar [Table 20]. Both had drop rates around 4%-5%, completion rates between 12%-14%, and percentage continuing to a sixth year between 81%-84%.

Table 20 – Year 5 Outcomes Data Comparison

Year 5	Students	Drop %	Completion %	% Continuing Next Year
2016	130	5%	14%	81%
2017	367	4%	12%	84%

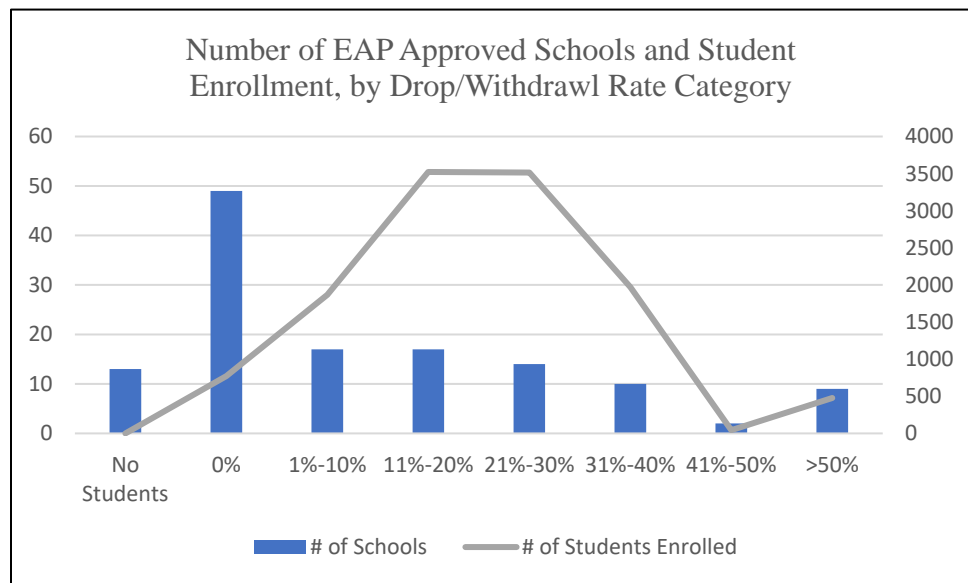
Schools with High Drop Rates

Analysis of student outcomes at EAP approved institutions shows that there are several schools that had particularly high

drop rates during the 2021 EAP year.

Out of the 135 schools that reported data, 49 schools enrolling a total of 772 students reported a 0% drop

Table 21 – Schools and Enrollment by Drop Rate



rate in 2021. 17 schools enrolling 3,522 students had a drop rate between 11% and 20%, and

another 14 schools enrolling a total of 3,514 students had a drop rate between 21% and 30% [Table 21].

Most concerning is the number of students enrolled in schools that reported a drop rate greater than 50% in 2021. Nine schools enrolling 477 students had drop rates higher than 50%, ranging from a school with a drop rate of 53.28% to a school with a drop rate of 83.33%. Given that the last time this report was created for the 2019 Cohort there was only one school with a drop rate of over 50%, this is a worryingly large increase that should be paid close attention to.

Analysis and Trends

Decreasing Enrollment

Overall, the 2021 outcomes data marked a return to normalcy following the dip in enrollment during the 2020 Cohort. Despite this improvement in student numbers, 2021 is part of the growing trend of decreasing enrollment in EAP approved schools. Dating back to 2012, there have only been two years where student enrollment has increased: 2019 – marking the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (see Table 1 for breakdown of cohort periods), and 2021 – following a steep drop-off in 2020. It will be vitally important to investigate enrollment for the upcoming 2022 Cohort to see if the last three years of fluctuations continue. If the beginning enrollment of each cohort returns to the trend line from 2018 and before, we should expect to see somewhere around 12,000 students enrolled in EAP approved schools next year.

Impact of Covid-19 on the 2020 Reporting Year

Across the board there have been clear impacts of Covid-19 on cohort outcomes data. This impact was most clearly seen across all cohorts with a steep decrease in completion percentage and a steep increase in the percentage of students who continued with their program the following year, compared to pre-Covid averages.

Starting with the 2020 Cohort, in their first year (2020) the completion percentage for students dropped 24% compared to the average completion rate of the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Cohorts in their first year (2016-2019). Meanwhile, the 2020 Cohort's percentage of continuing students increased 22% in the 2020 reporting year compared to the average from the 2016-2019 Cohorts' second years.

In the 2019 Cohort's second year (2020), the completion percentage for students dropped 9% compared to the average completion rate of the pre-Covid 2016, 2017 and 2018 Cohorts in their second year (2017, 2018, 2019). Similarly, the 2019 Cohort's percentage of continuing students increased 9% compared to the average for a cohort's second year from 2016-2018.

The third year for the 2018 Cohort (2020) saw an 8% drop in completion rate compared to the average rate for a cohort's third year prior to Covid, and a 15% increase in percent continuing next year compared to the pre-Covid average for a third year cohort.

Each cohort also saw a decrease in drop rate compared to the averages for their year in a pre-Covid cohort. Overall, it will be important to monitor what happens with this higher number than normal of continuing students in the cohorts impacted by Covid.

Cohort Results

The 2021 Cohort's first year marked a return to standard first year cohort averages. Although enrollment is still behind the beginning numbers for the 2016-2019 cohorts, the 2021 Cohort had a drop percentage, completion percentage, and a percentage of students continuing next year all in-line with first year averages. It is too early to say for sure, but this points to the impact on outcomes data in 2020 being a temporary factor.

Following a rough first year for the 2020 Cohort where only 13% of students completed their program – a drop of more than 20% from historical trends – year two was more in-line with

expected results. Although the completion rate was still the second lowest dating back to the 2016 Cohort at 27%, it was in the ballpark of previous results. Given its smaller size and high number of continuing students in the first year, this cohort will be especially important to monitor in future years.

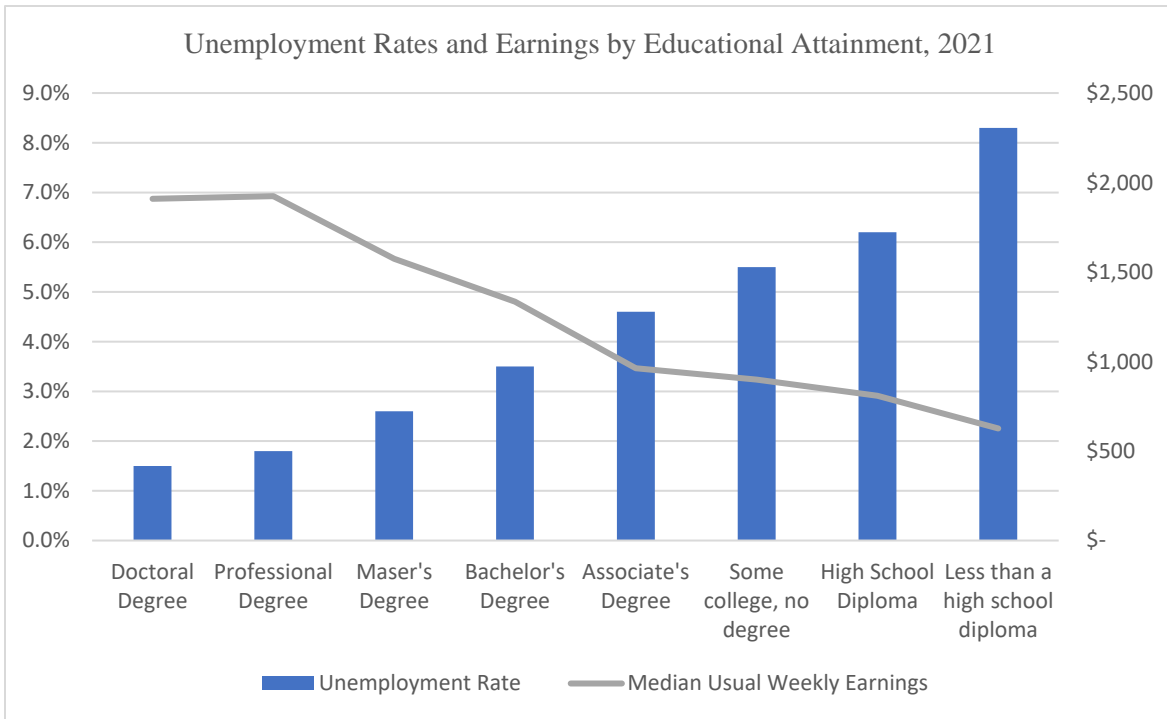
Similarly to the 2021 Cohort, the third year of the 2019 Cohort showed a return to expected cohort averages. With outcomes rates returning to average levels for a cohort's third year. Interestingly, the fourth year of the 2018 Cohort was the only to not return to pre-Covid averages. The drop, completion and continuing rates for the 2018 Cohort were far more similar to the fourth year of the 2017 Cohort (2020) than they were to the fourth year of the 2016 Cohort (2019). Although a relatively small cohort, only 3% of total enrolled students in 2021, it is worth noting this change.

Increase of Schools with High Drop Rates

One of the biggest standouts with this report was the increase in the number of schools with a drop rate of greater than 50%. When this report was last created, its analysis of the 2019 reporting year found that only one school had a drop rate greater than 50%. Furthermore, that one school “only had one student enrolled in a program during the 2019 EAP school year and should be treated as an outlier.” This year, nine schools had a drop rate of greater than 50% with 477 students enrolled. As students with lower levels of education are shown to be at an employment and earnings disadvantage compared to those with a higher level of education [Table 22]¹, this trend of particular concern. Furthermore, those students who drop out may also be shouldered with student debt.

¹ Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
<https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/unemployment-earnings-education.htm>

Table 22 – Unemployment Rates and Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2021



Conclusion

In summary, the 2021 reporting year was a mixed result for EAP approved schools. On one hand, new outcomes data from the 2021 Cohort shows that school enrollment is rebounding from the stark decline in 2020. Furthermore, students across all cohorts are showing resiliency and improved outcomes numbers after a decline during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, these improvements are against the backdrop of a growing trend in declining enrollment numbers and a stark increase in schools with high drop rates. It will be vitally important in the coming reporting year to watch closely and respond to these continued changes in enrollment numbers and drop rates.

