

UNL's six-year graduation rate exceeds national average

Melissa Allen | Posted: Tuesday, March 12, 2013 12:15 am

A little more than half of first-time college students graduate within six years, according to a new report by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

It found that of the 1.9 million students enrolled in all degree-granting institutions in fall 2006, 54.1 percent graduated within six years. About 29 percent of students dropped out of college altogether.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln had a six-year graduation rate of 64.6 percent last fall, according to data from Institutional Research and Planning.

Students said they think UNL's rate is higher because administrators have made strides to improve the university's graduation rates, and some university advising officials agree.

"You're going to find that many types of institutions have different graduation rates," said Bill Watts, director of Campus Advising at UNL. "Different colleges have different missions for graduation. You'll find that research universities often have higher graduation rates."

Watts said retention efforts such as academic advising, leadership opportunities and Undergraduate Creative Activities & Research Experiences, which allows undergraduate students to participate in university research, keep students in college.

"There's a positive correlation with students who are involved in these practices and their graduation rates," Watts said.

UNL is working to get six-year graduation rates to 70 percent, Watts said. To make this a possible, the university has made reforms to its student degree audit in MyRed and is expanding the learning communities for next fall.

"The key to staying updated on credits and graduation is by working closely with students and their assigned academic advisers," Watts said.

Senior industrial engineering major Alex Meitl plans to graduate within six years. Already in his fifth year, he said it's not easy juggling school, studying and working, which can get in the way of graduating within a certain time frame.

"I don't even party," he said. "I just focus on school. I know there's a lot of students here that are over four-year students. There's only a few I know that's graduated within that."

Haley Williams, a sophomore textiles and clothing designs major, agrees that keeping up with school work, as well as outside jobs and extracurricular activities can be tough.

“One thing that’s really helped is taking summer classes,” she said. “But sometimes there’s certain classes in the school year that are only offered at certain times, and it can be hard scheduling it all in.”

Although it isn’t always easy, graduating within a reasonable amount of time is more than possible, Williams said.

“It’s up to the students to keep track of their credits and what they want to do with their schedule,” she said. “It’s not the teachers’ initiative; it’s us students.”

Meitl said he thought graduating within six years was the norm at UNL.

“For the most part, I think people graduate under six years here,” said Meitl. “I guess I’m just a slow poke.”

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