



Drop for Non-Payment Procedure

UC Merced

Philosophy

UC Merced's Drop for Non-Payment procedure is rooted in the university's broader commitment to the concept of Student Success, consisting of "a collaboration and shared responsibility among students, faculty, staff, and administration."¹ The process intends to ensure students are successful in fulfilling their financial obligation to the university, which in turn frees them to succeed in their educational journey. The process does this by providing 1) clear and reasonable payment requirements and timelines, 2) personalized communication campaigns, 3) staff assistance in navigating complex decisions, and 4) safeguards against the incurring of unnecessary debt.

Guiding principles

Informed by the philosophy and administrative considerations outlined above, the Drop for Non-Payment Workgroup is guided by the following principles in its execution of the process:

- **Transparency**

Payment expectations, term-specific dates and deadlines, process workflow, and other essential information will be clearly defined for staff involved in the procedure, posted on a central website as a resource for students, and regularly reiterated in the communication and messaging presented to students. A deeper degree of transparency will be gained by students and the university entering into a "Statement of Financial Responsibility Agreement," in which obligations are agreed to in writing. This transparency contributes to the efficient management of the campus's accounts receivable operation, which ultimately provides funding to support the mission of the university.
- **Dynamic Communication**

Outreach to students regarding the requirements of the process will be frequent, timely, and varied in the form of email, phone, text messaging, and campus signage. As technology allows, communication will also be customized, using conditional logic based on each student's situation. Correspondence between staff and students will be recorded in a shared administrative system to minimize run-around and fragmentation of the process.
- **Student-Centered Timeline**

Key dates related to communication campaigns, payment deadlines, course disenrollment, and account resolution will be shaped primarily by our student population's academic calendar, identifying times when students are likely to be engaged and avoiding times when they are likely

¹ <https://studentsuccess.ucmerced.edu/student-success-definition>

not. We will refrain from dropping unpaid students from classes until they have physically returned to campus after academic breaks, allowing them to interact with services offices in person. We will also avoid dropping students on Fridays and prior to holidays or campus-wide events to ensure staff support is immediately available. We will also be mindful that the process is a useful enrollment management tool for vacating seats in impacted classes when students are not attending, making them available to students who are.

- **Total Bill**

So far as possible, the student's bill prior to the payment deadline and the account balance considered in course disenrollment decisions will be a total bill, a comprehensive summary of all charges expected for a term, including tuition, fees, housing, health insurance, and other expenses. The account balance threshold used to determine student drop eligibility will be reasonable and fair, navigating a middle ground between a limit so high it adversely impacts accounts receivables and places students at financial risk, and so low that students are unnecessarily removed from classes for a negligible balance.

- **Individuality**

Despite the procedure's standard structure, we acknowledge each student's circumstance may be unique and may require personalized attention. We also recognize certain student populations should be exempted from the process entirely, cases which we will attempt to identify equitably and accurately. Emphasis will be placed on engaging and dialoging with students prior to and after the payment deadline, taking a proactive approach so that course disenrollment is a last resort only after previous interventions have failed. Student engagement throughout the process will be measured using various benchmarks, such as "click-rate" data gleaned from emails, housing move-in status, and activity in the learning management system. Class attendance-taking, if ever instituted formally on campus, would likely be a valuable tool in establishing student engagement with the university.

- **Minimize Administrative Workload**

The business processes used by staff to communicate with students, resolve account issues, receive payments, disenroll classes, and guide students through services across multiple offices will strive to be efficient and automated wherever possible, minimizing administrative hindrances like manual data entry and premature course disenrollments that could have been avoided. By spending less energy and time on the logistics of the procedure, staff can more readily focus on the specifics of each student's needs. The business process allows campus units to coordinate and balance the workload to better serve students across multiple offices.

- **Nimbleness**

While adhering to its core philosophy and principles, the procedure will remain nimble in its operational details, making necessary adjustments and identifying opportunities for improvement, especially when practical aspects of the process are found to be inconsistent with the values in this document. Any proposed changes, however, to the underlying philosophy and principles of the process will first be brought to the respective Vice Chancellors for further consideration.