



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



Targeted student contact to improve retention and attrition

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Acknowledge

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Targeted student contact to improve retention and attrition

- Why did we increase our efforts in contacting students?
- Who?
- How?
- What we learnt
- Case study

“Stalking” is such a strong word. I prefer “Intense Research of an individual”.

GIRLFROMPARIS | TUMBLR

Why?

Why did we increase our efforts in contacting students?

- Attrition rates were high – poor outcomes for students, community and nation; poor return on investment for university
- Students were not accessing support or talking to staff – services there, but often not used
- As part of customer care or customer service
- We aspired to give students the opportunity to open up and express concerns and feedback to our staff, in a secure and safe environment that may not become available to them in class.

Who?

Inherent characteristics

v

Behavioural characteristics

Who?

- Used **inherent** student characteristics modelled on previous student cohorts that had withdrawn –
 - Age
 - Time lapse since they last studied
 - Entering with credit (eg. From VET course)
 - Low socio-economic status (using postcode indicator)
 - First in family
 - ATAR scores
 - Focus on commencing students

Who?

- Used **behavioural** student characteristics to suggest problems were emerging or had emerged
 - No activity on Learning Management System
 - Poor result in early assessment
 - 'At risk' – 50% or more Fails in one semester or trimester
 - 'Show cause' – 50% or more Fails in 2 consecutive semesters or trimesters

Who?

- Used **behavioural** student characteristics to suggest problems were emerging or had emerged
 - High number of withdrawals without penalty
 - High number of adverse circumstances applications

How?



How did we reach our students?

- **Phoned**
 - Initial calls made by experienced enquiry staff or senior students
 - Follow-up calls made by Student Experience Officers
- **Emailed**
 - Used follow-up email to confirm phone messages – or just emailed if we couldn't get through on the phone
- **Met Face-to-Face**
 - Case-managed students in need of ongoing support

How?

How did we capture information?

- Scripts were drafted by staff to ensure information was captured that informed the business – based on some early forays into this type of work by Faculties
- Information was recorded in the CRM, Right Now

What we have learnt

- What students do not know.....

*Fail grades affect my GPA
and appear on my
transcript?*

I can withdraw after census date?

I have a Program Officer and a Program Convenor?

But I didn't know where to go....

There's that support at uni?

Oh...I didn't know about that....

Trends....

- Positive reactions to us contacting them
- How little some students know
- Student issues – mental health
- Difficulties in engaging the disengaged

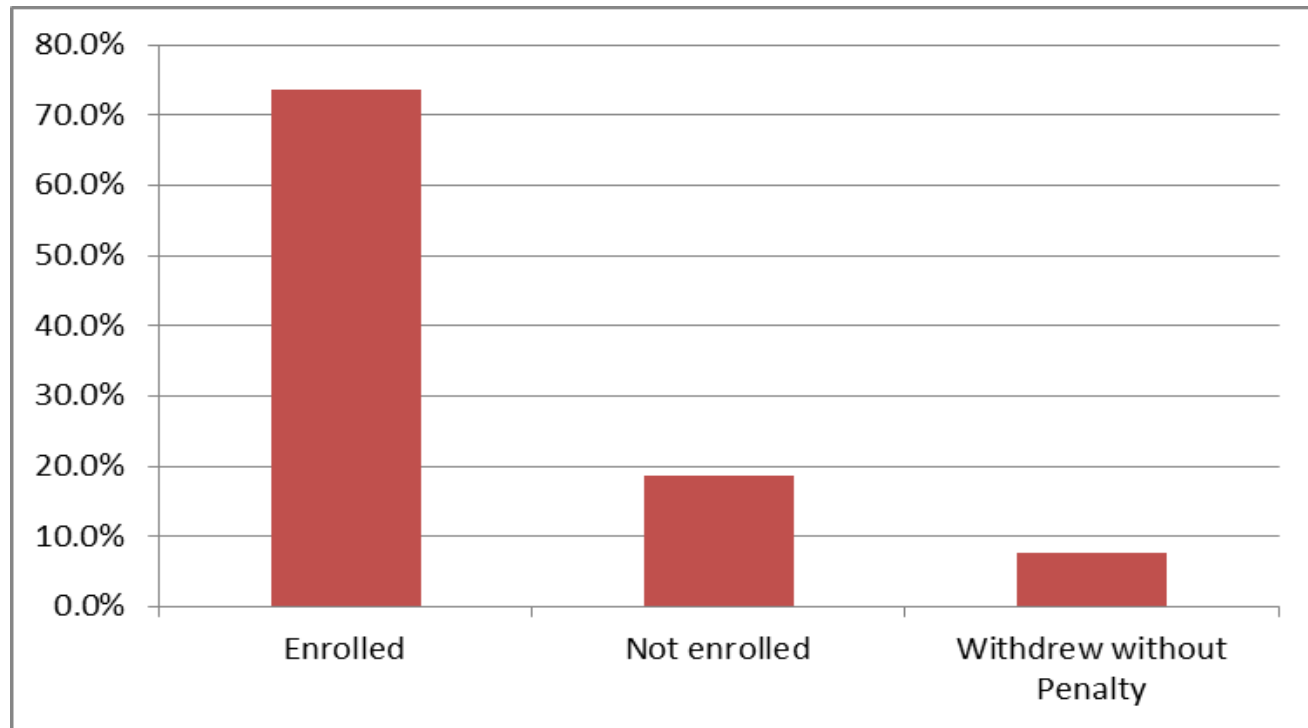


Staff lessons

- **Initial hesitation, but positive support for students**
 - **Ability to give support the student would otherwise not have received**
- **Increased understanding of the student experience**
 - **Extension of knowledge of services and student issues**
- **Engagement from academic staff with the highlighted student issues**

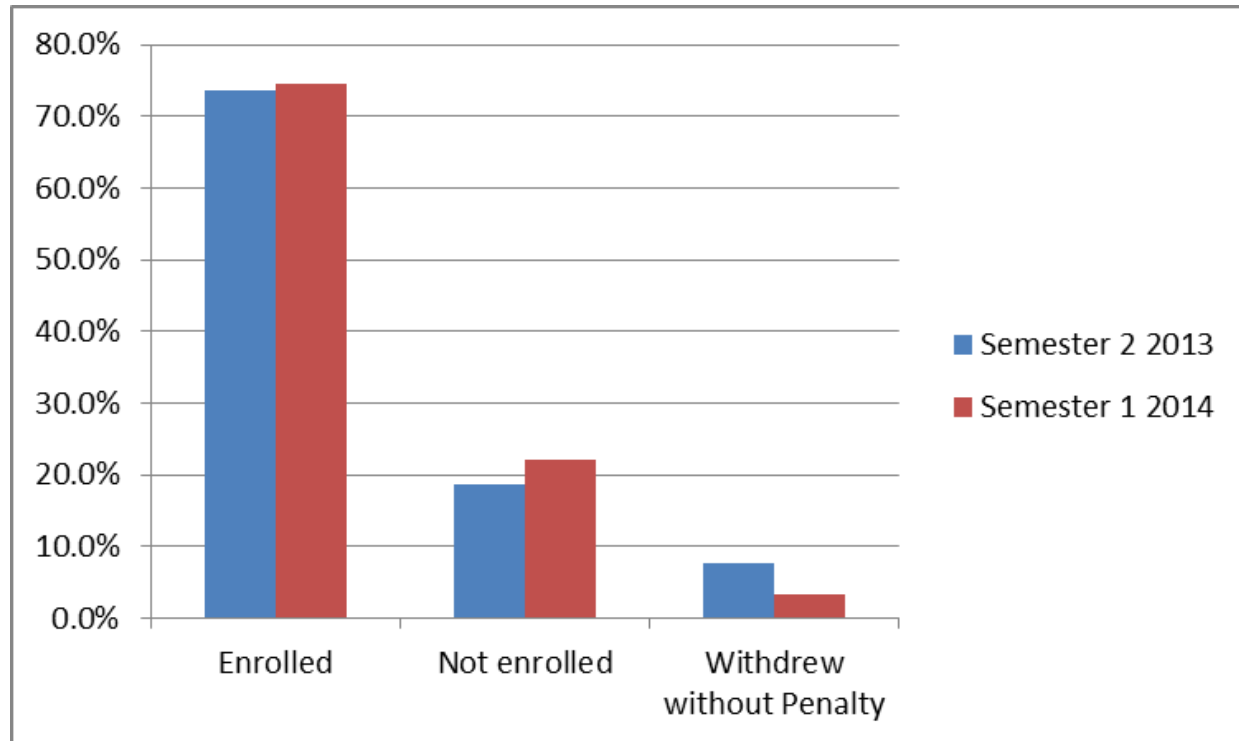
Semester 2 2013 Enrolment Status of 'Contacted' At Risk Students in Same Degree

At risk sem 1
2013
contacted
students (%)



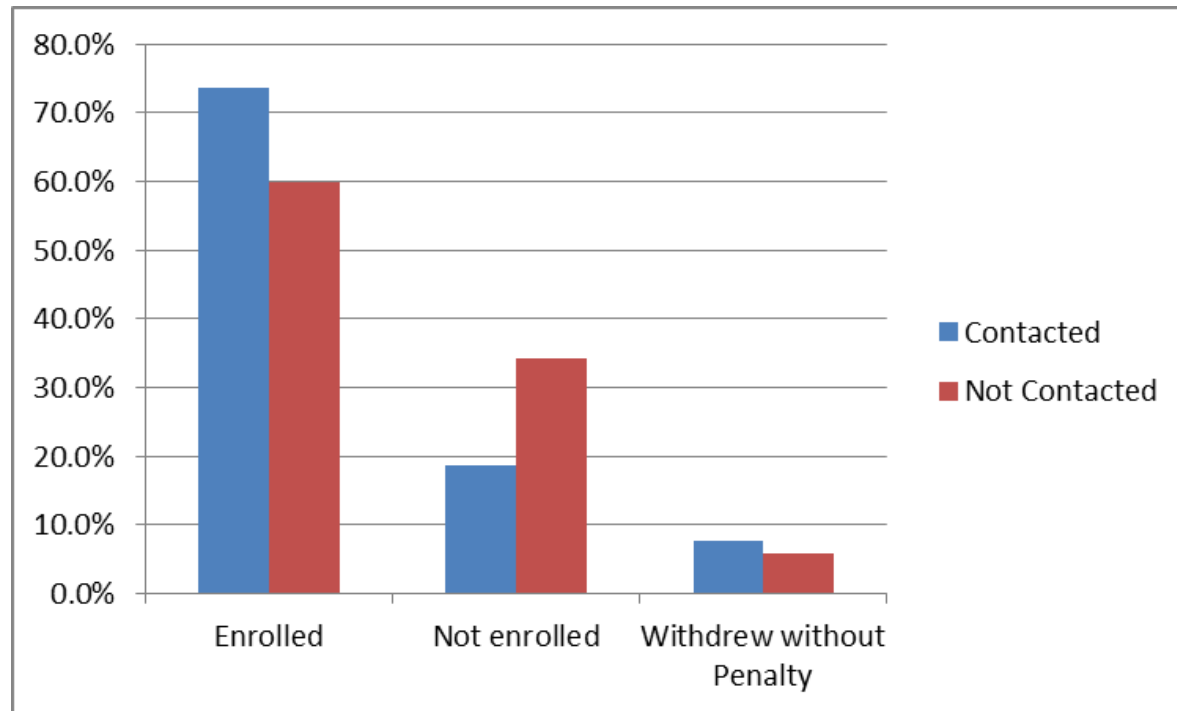
Semester 1 2014 and Semester 2 2013 Enrolment Status of 'Contacted' At Risk Students in Same Degree

At risk sem 1 2013 contacted students (%)



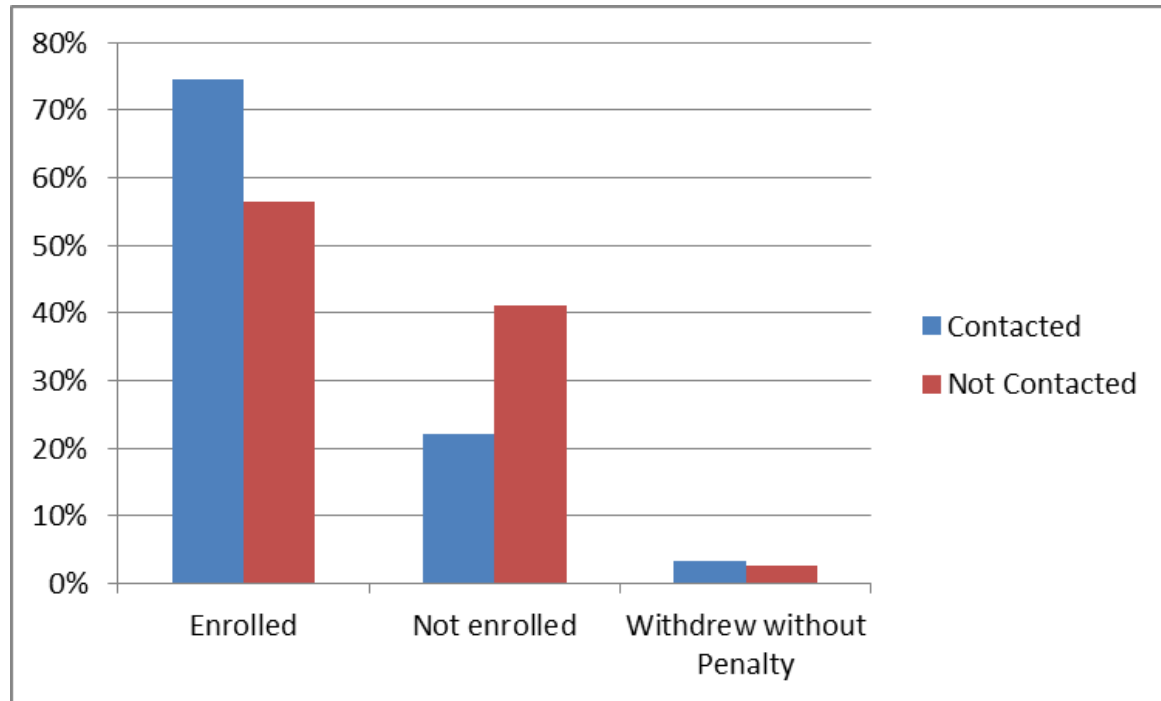
Contacted versus Not Contacted – semester 2 2013

At risk sem 1
2013 students
(%)



Contacted versus Not Contacted – semester 1 2014

At risk sem 1
2013 students
(%)





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