

# Barriers to Student Success

## Raw Data Collected From Daytime, On-Campus Business Students, Fall Semester 2013

Student responses to the question, “*What are the three greatest barriers to your success as an ARCC student?*”

**N=105 (Five classes Cambridge & Coon Rapids)**

Submitted by Mark Widdel

### **Need for More Career Focus/Career Services**

1. There should be a college focus towards job placement.
2. More career-building (free) services should be available.
3. Students aren't taught the necessities of how to incorporate the subject they are learning into their current life or job.
4. I am wondering where the career services or the placement service office is?
5. Why don't we have company recruiters coming in to recruit students?

### **Class Length / Times**

1. One problem I have been having with some teachers is the problem of being kept after the scheduled class time. This problem has been occurring in one of my classes almost every time we meet, and sometimes the professor makes us stay up to ten minutes after class.

### **Certificates/Credits /Programs**

1. There are lots of certificates out there that students can complete that we aren't too aware of. Know what certificates are available and how to obtain them would be very beneficial.
2. The college should get more colleges to offer bachelor degrees on campus.

### **Student Activities/Organizations/Culture/Community**

1. Volunteer student mentor groups are needed for new students.
2. Being an older student is sometimes a little overwhelming. It can feel like you are lost in a sea of young people, and leave you feeling alone and somewhat out of place. There are no support groups for older people.

3. I think the multicultural office needs to be coordinated by an individual who really understands what's happening in different cultural back grounds.
4. There is a lack of recognition and assistance to international or multicultural students. Being the vice-president of the multicultural club I have noticed that those in charge of ARCC multicultural relations do a poor job of communicating with multicultural students.
5. ARCC lacks community. In my three years attending ARCC taking courses at both the Cambridge and Coon Rapids campuses and online, there has always been a lack of community.
6. I believe that the school should encourage students to get behind their athletics teams.
7. I felt as though there weren't many student clubs or organizations that weren't involving nursing or art majors.

### **Course Registration/Scheduling**

1. The class descriptions don't relate to the class. Things are different than what we're told.
2. The term, hybrid course, means too many things.
3. Signing up for classes is one of the most important processes and times in the school year. The problem with selecting courses is not doing it in time. It's always unfortunate when you go choose a course and it's already full. But I'm the first one to go to college and I didn't know anything about registering. When I finally figured it out, almost all of the classes I wanted, were full. I waited until this semester to come here.
4. Some classes are offered certain times and most of them are usually full. It is hard to get every course in the 2-4 years that we plan to be in.
5. We have no awareness of how the instructor is going to be when picking the class. There's no review of the instructor or important course info from the student's point of view.
6. There are a lot of classes that are only offered at Coon Rapids or only online – they are never offered at Cambridge.
7. I switched to the Human Resource program this semester and now I've found out that one of the required courses won't be offered until Fall 2015. I have no intention on being here until then.
8. The program guide sheet was wrong. It said I needed a Natural Science class and I took Astronomy. Now I found out I need a science class with a lab and it's too late to withdraw from the class. This is a very costly mistake and I feel that I'm not really the one at fault but the college won't do anything about it.
9. Class times are not very well spread out – everything we need to take seems to be offered from 9:00 to noon.

### **Advising/Student Services**

1. Advisors should know more about a class than what the short course description says.
2. Counselors are not on the same page when it comes to degree requirements. I had one counselor tell me that I have taken every course to complete the AA. When I returned to

discuss transferring, I was told that I did not have all my required classes. This was extremely frustrating, financially and emotionally.

3. Information given to me by the info desk was false information.
4. I don't think the advisors are helpful at all. Every time I have went in for school related problems they were unhelpful, and I felt like they didn't know what they were doing. I've gone in multiple times for schedule help and they have also given me classes I don't need to take for my transfer degree.
5. Often times I've sent messages to student services and I don't receive a response in time or sometimes not at all.
6. Student services did not listen to me my first semester here, I had dropped my Biology class and was never told that they actually didn't drop me from the class, so instead they failed me.
7. It's 2-3 weeks out to make an appointment with an advisor in Nov and Dec. Good luck to people that don't know that.
8. The workers in financial aid office can be quite rude and condescending. They made me feel terrible and embarrassed, especially when speaking to them on the telephone.
9. Areas like the financial aid office, records, and help desk can be seen without anyone on site. The place is empty.
10. Academic Advisors don't actually sit down to fully help you, when you're in their office they basically rush you.
11. The counselors seem like they didn't have enough time which made me feel rushed and an annoyance to them. Fifteen minutes isn't enough time to discuss everything.
12. Hours for getting student ID's can be inconvenient for students. Business, Financial Aid, and Records desks are sometimes un-manned, Or have too few staff to handle demand.
13. I dropped a course last semester after only attending a few weeks, I never returned to the class and somehow there was no record of me dropping the course. No one seemed to be able to help me correct the problem, after six hours of being shuffled off from person to person I was back at square one and gave up.
14. The lack of help from the advisors. I needed help signing up for classes one day and they refused to help me because I didn't make an appointment. They have a sheet for walk-ins but there weren't any appointments for that day.
15. Scheduling times with an advisor. If you need to meet with an advisor and make an appointment, you have to call a month ahead of time just to get an appointment within the next week.
16. I was told a class would transfer (this one) and now I was told this semester it won't (I'm going to the U of M). This really makes me mad.
17. This semester I was struggling with a class so I decided that it would be in my best interest to drop it. I had an advisor guide me through the withdrawal process on the ARCC website. She never informed me that I would still have to pay for the class even though I was signing up for it again, next semester. She didn't warn me about what it would do to my transcript. I felt like she didn't care about these things.

18. Advising and counseling is not user-friendly. When I go to the help desk without an appointment, I get turned away. When I do make an appointment, neither the advisor or counselor provides me with sufficient information.
19. I thought I had lost my iPad a few months back so I tried calling the school to get ahold of the lost and found and I'm calling the school over the phone. The phone menu wasn't very clear and no one answered.
20. The front desk workers always seem like they hate their job.

### **Tutoring**

1. The criteria at which the tutors are recruited needs to be reevaluated to hire competent and knowledgeable ones.
2. The tutoring center, it is hard to get a tutor and once you get one they aren't very helpful for the subjects they help with.
3. The math center is a great resource that provides help for any math related questions. The problem falls in when I have a question and am not able to go into the math center when it's not open.
4. For the students who do reach out for extra help, many find it within the tutoring center. You may find yourself sitting there for over an hour before being approached.
5. The tutor center needs better schedule and more informed helpers.
6. There are groups to help study, but not specific tutors for each subject (that I am aware of). I believe that could be helpful to those that are struggling in a class and could use some help grasping the material.
7. I'm taking business math online and went to the tutoring center for help. Three people tried to help me, but couldn't. Zane, the last guy who tried, was able to at least read my book and kind of get it.

### **Instruction/Class Practices**

1. Teachers need to make the class exciting and joyful, so when they start teaching the course should not be boring or overwhelming.
2. Too many teachers do not allow laptops in their class rooms.
3. Teachers lack technology experience. Teachers should take a class on how to use technology as it will improve efficiency. They shouldn't have to rely on Technology to come and fix things. It wastes too much time.
4. Teachers could offer more help or explanations. I had a teacher that wouldn't explain things very well so I went and got tutoring which ended up not helping because the teacher did things differently.
5. Teachers need to have more in-class discussions. It helps retain more information rather than try memorizing things.

6. Some say that the best work you do is the work you love. Teachers don't do enough to help students find their passion and I think it's because most of my teachers don't love what they're doing.
7. Teachers do not motivate students enough. No incentives other than the grades being given out.
8. In some classes, a lot of the material being taught isn't relevant to today's times.
9. I don't think professors distinguish between individuals enough. I feel that we're too often expected to measure up to an unrealistic standard or an ideal student that doesn't exist.
10. I feel that my teachers overlook the fact that we have many other commitments in our daily lives. Sometimes school can't be a priority and I'm made to feel like a horrible person because of that.
11. Instructors shouldn't just hand out a packet of homework for you to read and then come back the next class with the assignment done, with no in-class discussion. This is just bothersome.
12. It seems that teachers get to teach their own personal version of a class. Shouldn't they communicate with each other and teach the same things when they're teaching the same subjects?
13. I don't think the teachers at ARCC have enough performance reviews – they should be assessed every year. A group of us complained about a bad teacher two years ago and we hear that he's doing the same thing now as he did back then. Doesn't bad teaching ever get corrected?
14. One of my classes is almost 3 hours long and the teacher lectures. It makes it harder to focus for long durations.
15. I have a teacher that has us do all our homework during class. Shouldn't she be teaching us something because shouldn't us students be expected to do our homework after class?
16. My teacher jokes around a lot and is really entertaining – everyone loves him but hardly anyone gets his assignments. Then when I talked to him to explain the assignment, he told me no one else had had any questions about it. Now I just guess what he wants and turn stuff in.
17. Instructors should make reasonable due dates. A lot of times, essays or others assignments are due at 11:59 pm. It's not like that is when they grade the assignments.
18. I like regular classes instead of online classes because all I did in online classes was answer the end of the chapter questions and take a bunch of chapter tests.
19. Tests shouldn't be such a huge part of the class and our grade. There should be more hands on activities.

### **Teaching Practices**

1. The online courses consist of teaching yourself. It was surprising that I actually had to pay for such classes. The classes are about learning on your own, with the teacher telling you what to search. Google was more involved in this class than the teacher.
2. Classes that are lectures should include some class participation. Many of the classes that I attend that are lecture orientated make me sit in class where I do not learn anything.
3. Lectures are somewhat pointless. Some teachers would make a PowerPoint and spend all class time reading it to students.

4. Teachers should build a relationship with their students. It's terrible if we go the whole semester and you don't even know our names.
5. No agenda for class. There is no problem in a different way of teaching, but some teachers seem to have no set agenda for class, while it makes the material confusing and hard to follow.
6. I have had too many teachers talk at me instead of with me.
7. Frustration with critical thinking questions. Not having enough time to fully understand what my professor wanted me to take away from the question.
8. When there is a large class the teachers don't interact with students. They stand at the front of the class and lecture until time is up. There is barely any class discussion or asking if anyone doesn't understand the concept that is being taught.
9. Not enough student interaction in class.
10. Another problem is when professors over-do their own bias in class which is even worse when you oppose their view.
11. I cannot take notes during the lectures as fast as the Professors are talking. Even with a voice recorder I have to listen to it 3-4 times before I get the message written down that I need to know. I do not like teachers that go strictly by text book.
12. Teachers give us so much information that will go through their power points too fast.
13. The first problem that I want to address is when a professor believes the students should be as smart as them without them teaching to the student's level for the class.
14. Long lectures for unnecessary amount of time doesn't teach the broad range of students who learn in different ways.
15. When I am learning something new, I feel like taking some notes helps, but examples are necessary. Constant lectures for me do not help me learn the material.
16. What's with all these grade school worksheets? Fill in the missing word. Really?
17. One may learn hands on, visually, or simply reading the textbook. When a teacher is focused on only one of these aids, it makes it harder for the other types of learners to follow along.
18. Some teachers spend too much time explaining subjects on power points instead of doing interactive assignments in order to better understand the material.
19. One of the problems I have noticed is the general demeanor of a professor towards a failing or about to fail student. Student misses a big assignment and then the teacher treats them a lot more negatively while it affects the student emotionally.
20. If a teacher doesn't like his job, everyone can tell it and it ruins it for everyone.
21. Teachers should contact students whose grade falls below a C. Maybe they should be forced to see a tutor.
22. Too much individual work is boring. Allow the class members to work together for activities.

### **Attendance Policies**

1. The policy a lot of professors have about attendance is bad. Not everyone has the same life and schedule to work around. If someone needs to miss 4 days, than they should be able to. It's their money and if they want to participate, it should be up to them.

2. It's not fair - teachers who grade based on attendance, or only allow you to miss a certain amount of class periods before you fail.
3. Excused absences should be allowed.
4. Attendance should not be mandatory in classes.
5. Grades should not be based so heavily on attendance. I have had a few classes that include attendance into a grade.
6. I feel the attendance policies that certain instructors have are unfair and do not solve the solution of getting students to come in more correctly.
7. One of the teachers here has a very strict attendance policy, and doesn't allow people to come in to class late or after the class begins.
8. Students should not be penalized points automatically for not being there. There's good reasons why they can't make classes.

### **Make-Ups/Absence**

1. The instructor does not allow students to do make up assignments. For someone like me who has not attended school for X amount of years and just start college classes this could be tough getting back into the routine.
2. Losing points automatically and not being able to make them up if class is missed. Losing half your points for an assignment because you were not there for the discussion even if you had it done and turned in on time.
3. Not being able to make up a test date.
4. When a student is sick and unable to attend class for the test day. That person is unable to make up the test. If the student contacts the professor before the class period, I believe the student should be able to make it up.
5. Not having the opportunity to make up certain quizzes I missed due to extreme circumstances.
6. Inability to make up tests. I had a teacher whose class I missed because I was at the Mayo Clinic, 2 hours away, which is very hard to get into, and we had a test that day. I wasn't allowed to make it up no matter what the circumstances would have been.
7. In one of my classes we'd have a pop quiz every week in the first 10 minutes of the class. If you were late or missed class, you were never allowed to make it up. It's not very fair.
8. My teacher is gone and we just have to deal with it. I'm gone and the teacher doesn't have to do anything.

### **Grading**

1. Some of the teachers take very long to grade and it can make it difficult to know how you are doing in the class.
2. It is tough to learn from my mistakes when I do not receive my tests back until the day before my next test.

3. In most of my classes there are very few assignments and opportunities for points, so if a student makes a mistake and accidentally forgets about one thing they are essentially screwed for their overall grade.
4. If the class average on a test is below 50% they should be able to retake the exam.
5. Teachers don't give enough feedback on the graded assignments.
6. Our grades depending mostly on tests – why is that?
7. Teachers not having enough points in their grade book does not give the students enough opportunity to prove themselves in class. Professors need to have a certain amount of points in their grade book so the students can recover from an assignment or test that didn't go right.
8. We have teachers that take forever to grade tests. In one of my classes we didn't get to see our test grade until three weeks after taking it.
9. Some instructors take too long to grade assignments. I've been waiting over a month for several assignments to get put into the grade book, along with in-class activities and participation points for one of my classes and it makes it very difficult to know how I am doing in the course.
10. I had a teacher that didn't grade a single assignment she had given to her students nor given any feedback on any presentations in class either.
11. Didn't think I'd ever get any of my homework back from the teacher and then in the last week of the semester, she handed it all back and told us it was really hard for her to get it all done. What a joke.
12. A former teacher had another job that obviously prevented him from getting our homework graded and returned. I've got another job too, but he still expects me to do it and hand it in whenever he says.
13. Personally, I'm sick of spending weeks on a project, only to get it back with a score and a single comment.

### **Group Projects**

1. In almost my entire course at ARCC, each class has had multiple group projects, and in every situation my group mates fail to do their part and I end up doing virtually all the work the night before it's due.
2. When teachers make students do group projects. Many people will not help you and just want the grade. You also have people who think that everything should be there way.
3. We should not be required to do group projects outside of class. These projects always result in someone in the group pulling the most weight for the team.
4. People not taking group projects seriously. I had a couple of group projects this semester and at some points there were people who wouldn't show up.
5. We're told that we need to do group projects because we'll be expected to work that way in business. I don't believe this. If a company had a group like mine, they'd go out of business and I don't like the fact that I'm getting a bad grade because I'm assigned with a bunch of people who don't care.

### **Homework**

1. The biggest problem at ARCC is that there are no guidelines or restrictions for teachers, for example two students that are studying the same thing but have different teachers could be doing two completely different things, have incredibly different amounts and types of homework and could be assessed completely different. This is unfair.
2. Non-routine assignments that are given on the fly are sometimes impossible to complete because they can't be planned for and scheduled.
3. Last minute assignments are horrible when too many teachers do them at the same time.
4. Many teachers have assignments due either the next day or the next class period which many students find difficult because of work or a crazy schedule.
5. Some classes have a really light workload and others are a lot more. – shouldn't every three credit class have about the same amount of homework.?
6. There is too much online homework. We come to class then have to sit on the computer and stare at a screen from hours to do homework. People are always saying how they need to spend less time on technology (video games, Internet, TV, phones) but yet teachers always have use doing our work online.
7. A problem that I find is when professors try and overload homework in the last couple of weeks.
8. Having more than one assignment due on the same day makes it more difficult to keep track of, if teachers did not have more than one assignment due on one day it would make it easier to focus on one thing.
9. When there is a day off, you shouldn't have to turn in homework on that day.
10. Requiring certain formats to be used in entry level classes without any prior or current instruction on how to use said formats.
11. I don't think some teachers use class time wisely. In a few classes we do all our homework in class. I feel we should use class time to learn and do the homework on our own time.

### **Language Barriers**

1. Language/cultural barriers and differences are not dealt with by my teachers. The problem seems to be all mine. Shouldn't they meet me part way?
2. Not being able to communicate with your professor on a clear level is not a good thing when you want to learn and succeed in his/her class.
3. I feel the teachers need to take the language barrier into consideration a little bit. Even though mine isn't huge some little words are different that can make things confusing. For example "Parenthesis" or "Period".

### **Online (Emails, D2L, Website, etc)**

1. How come there's no mobile app for D2L or for our email?
2. The D2L site uses a lot of data. For people who have a limited amount of data usage at home, this makes it very expensive.

3. Some courses unnecessarily require internet or computer work. I find it very frustrating when my professors require work done electronically that could have been more easily done with paper and pencil.
4. Most teachers use D2L for all of their assignments, this is a problem if some students don't have access to a computer or internet on a daily basis.
5. One of my current classes requires me to use D2L, a textbook publisher's website and in-class submission. I can't keep track of everything – there are too many places. I'm working and going to school – the teacher should take pity on me (and others) and have only one place to submit homework.
6. Every teacher uses D2L differently as far as where to find what.
7. The online classes can be very frustrating with horrible communication between students on group projects, with the only real option being email it can take people days to get back to you on certain, very important things.
8. Unless the class is a blended, hybrid, or online they should not be able to require you to do an online participation like discussion questions.
9. Everyone should implement D2L into their course, some teachers believe that D2L is too complicated and doesn't put it into their regime.
10. The main problem that I have with Anoka Ramsey is the D2L website. This whole semester there was always a problem with D2L.
11. The first problem I have noticed is the extensive amounts of online work that involved in classes that are not even considered "hybrid" classes.
12. My first problem is the fact that most of the other classes other than our class, everything is due online. All of the information and documents are online on D2L. I can't get to it all the time.
13. Online courses are poorly formatted and not optimized to some browsers. Communication is tough when group projects are presented along with technical problems and features not working.
14. New students can get very confused about student email and D2L. Nobody really told me how to use these, it was trial and error until I finally figured it out.
15. I have one teacher that doesn't accept anything through D2L or email, this makes it hard to turn stuff in sometimes.
16. Some instructors do not use D2L effectively. The site can be so unorganized that students cannot find the correct assignments, documents, or even drop boxes. It creates frustration for students and can lead to missing assignments if the students aren't searching in the right place, but some professors scatter information all over and it's nearly impossible to find what you are looking for quickly.
17. I feel all material on D2L should be related to quizzes for D2L. When the material does not match up and you must go find it elsewhere it makes things complicated.
18. I think using multiple websites for students to have to check is difficult. Having to use a skydrive or myITlab website on top of D2L and email is much to keep track of.
19. I would rather prefer teachings using paper submissions for assignments than D2L.
20. I don't learn well online so why am I forced to take so many classes that way?

**Parking Lot**

1. Getting to school 15 minutes early and can't find a parking spot.
2. I get to school sometimes 15-20 minutes early and the parking lot is a chaos as I spend most of my time trying to find a spot and some people are so aggressive and have cut me off for a parking spot.
3. It is difficult to find a spot to park sometimes if your class is a little later.
4. As an individual who rides the bus on a daily basis to ARCC, I find it very unfair and unnecessary for myself to have to pay for parking.
5. The parking lot is a mess in the winter.
6. The parking situation is terrible. There are too few parking lots for the number of students who commute.
7. Parking lots fill up fast, and if you don't have your first class until around 10 or 11am you oftentimes have to park in the empty field across the road from the thrift store or on the side of the streets.
8. Many flyers/business cards for local clubs are left on vehicles in parking lot. Ugh.
9. The parking lot is too small. Clearly half the time I am late is because I spend an hour of my time looking to park somewhere. I come from work and I shouldn't have to lose an hour pay because I have to leave work to make sure I get a parking spot.
10. You need to make more parking spaces available to students and closer to the school, always stuck looking for a parking spot for about 10-15 minutes which makes me late for class.
11. Parking lots at ARCC don't accommodate all of their students and staff. The other day, I arrived at school early just like I always do. I continued to drive around the parking lot for 30 minutes because there were absolutely no available parking lots.

**Computer Labs**

1. Classes should not be able to close down the open computer lab.
2. There aren't enough computers during peak times. The college should limit computer time during certain hours.
3. The computer lab is constantly crowded with people, and it is often difficult to find one to work on.
4. There are not always enough computers available in the computer labs. They are usually full and most days several computers are out of order for long periods.
5. The computer lab is always so packed that it can sometimes be difficult to find a computer to use for an urgent assignment. Many students don't have access to a computer at home and are on a very specific schedule.
6. The computer lab would always be packed with no computers open. I had to wait along with waiting 10 minutes to print a paper.
7. Computer labs are always full, and half of the people using the computers are playing browser-based games or doing non-school related activities.

8. There have been multiple times when I have gone down to the computer lab to work on some school projects or quizzes, but found myself walking out because there are no computers available (especially during the last week of finals). Computer lab closes early on occasion.
9. My teacher told me that it was expected that I use the computer labs for my homework. If that is true, why aren't there more labs to use, that have open computers to use when I need to use them?
10. I couldn't watch any of the videos for this class in the computer labs. I got the same error message all semester and the lab aid told me that they didn't want to load the fix because people were already watching too many videos.
11. Some of the lab aids are good but some just want to ignore us when we need help.

### **Reaching Teachers Outside of Class / Scheduled Meetings**

1. Professor's office hours have some negative effects on students. I know that professor don't have all the time in the world but if they had more flexible office hours that made them more available at school, it would be very beneficial to the students.
2. Teachers with poor office hours. Nearly all of my instructors have very short inconvenient office hours. Some have 30 minute windows and others have 50 minute windows.
3. Trouble communicating with teachers outside of class/ meeting their office hours. I normally have other classes during these time slots.

### **Textbooks**

1. Books in the bookstore are too expensive and you barely get any money back for them during the book buyback.
2. Some courses have required textbooks that never get used during the course. I have a textbook that I spent too much money on, I cannot return, or even sell back during the book buy back, that I have never once used because we did not need it.
3. Customized text books are a rip. We can't sell them back at the end of the semester.
4. I paid \$101 for a textbook and the instructor didn't assign anything from it. When I talked to her about it, she said, "you should have read it yourself, it would have been good for you."
5. Why are we required to pay extra for a disk that comes with the textbook that we never use?
6. The bookstore says I can rent books but none of my business books can be rented.