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ABSTRACT

A study, as part of a larger report on attrition and retention of students at Miami University, was undertaken to determine the reasons for withdrawing from the university prior to earning a degree. A questionnaire was mailed to the 1,026 students in the 1978 class who voluntarily left the institution and for whom correct addresses could be obtained. The most revealing question in the survey was probably an open-ended item that asked students to describe their major reason for leaving Miami. Responses were organized into one of eight categories: curriculum, personal circumstances, motivation, student life, academic ability, financial concerns, environmental problems, and instruction. "Successful dropouts" (those who left the college in good academic standing) tended to leave because they found another institution offering a curriculum of courses more suited to their needs, because of personal reasons only marginally related to Miami University, and because they felt out of place with other students or with Miami University's conservative environment and conduct regulations. "Unsuccessful dropouts" tended to withdraw because of poor academic performance, loss of interest in attending college, and personal circumstances. Miami University was found to be a satisfactory experience for most of the dropouts. (SW)

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# Survey Report



Student Life Research Service  
Student Affairs Division  
Miami University  
Oxford, Ohio

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This report was written for the Committee on Attrition, Retention and Enrollment at Miami. The findings of this survey are summarized in the main body of the Committee report, and the full study is included in the appendices. The Committee's report and recommendations are available from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. The author expresses special thanks to Dr. Derrell Hart, Associate Dean for Residence Learning, for his valuable suggestions in the development of the survey questionnaire used in this project and in the presentation of the results.

Report Prepared by: Michael J. Keller

FACTORS RELATED TO THE  
WITHDRAWAL OF STUDENTS  
FROM MIAMI UNIVERSITY

Office of the Dean of Student Life  
Office of Residence Learning

October 1979

## INTRODUCTION

Experience has shown that many students have been wrong in forecasting their college future. According to the American Council on Education's annual survey of freshmen, 1 percent of the members of the class of 1978 at Miami thought there was a very good chance they would drop out of school permanently, 2 percent predicted they would drop out temporarily, and 10 percent believed they would transfer to another college (or a total of 13 percent who did not expect to graduate from Miami). In reality, the withdrawal rate was much higher: more than a third of the entering freshmen in this class left Miami without earning a baccalaureate degree.

Assuming that the enrollment projections presented earlier in this report are accurate and Miami is destined to have fewer applicants in the 1980's, it would benefit the University to explore ways to limit the unnecessary attrition of undergraduates. Before this can be done, however, it is necessary to determine the reasons students have for withdrawing from Miami. President Shriver suggested such an investigation in his State of the University Address last fall, when he included "increased attention to student retention" among his top objectives for the academic year. The purpose of this section is to shed light on the important question, "Why do some of our students leave?"

Questionnaire - Following a review of some of the major literature on student retention and an examination of many survey instruments designed on this subject, a questionnaire was developed to identify the factors which contributed most to the withdrawal of students from Miami and to collect other helpful information pertinent to the study. This questionnaire is reproduced in the appendices.

The first section of the questionnaire contains 41 factors which could have been responsible for a student's decision to leave Miami. The order in which the items were listed on the instrument was determined by random selection. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each factor was, or was not, a reason for their withdrawal from Miami. In the second portion of the questionnaire, survey participants were asked to relate whether or not they received assistance from the University with respect to a variety of services and, if they did, whether they were satisfied with the quality of the help they got. The final section of the instrument sought personal and background information about the former students. Two open-ended questions accompanied the forced-choice items. Participants were asked to describe in their own words the most important reason for their decision to leave Miami and to suggest what, if anything, the University could have changed or done to encourage them to stay.

Sample and Data Collection - With the assistance of the staff of the Computer Management System Services, a roster was assembled containing the names and last known addresses of all members of the 1974 freshman class at Miami (Oxford campus only) who did not graduate here by the summer of 1978. It was requested that students in undergraduate academic programs which required more than four years of work and individuals who had been suspended or dismissed from the University for scholastic or disciplinary reasons be excluded from this list. This particular class was selected for the study because

1974 was the first year in which there was systematic data collection about dropouts at Miami. It should be noted that this class was somewhat atypical in that the University admitted a higher percentage of its applicant pool in 1974--thus lowering the average student ACT score, high school rank, and high school grade average.

An advance postcard with an address correction request was mailed to the 1,265 students on the roster. This card, which informed prospective respondents that they would be receiving a questionnaire concerning student withdrawal from Miami and urged their cooperation, performed two functions: it alerted the subjects to the pending arrival of the survey (thus reducing the possibility that it would be confused with junk mail and discarded), and it provided an inexpensive means of learning the new addresses of those persons who had changed their permanent residence since leaving Miami. Correct addresses could not be obtained for 189 of the former students. Three weeks after the mailing of the advance postcard, the questionnaire accompanied by a supporting letter from President Shriver was sent to the remaining students on the list. Each questionnaire was coded to facilitate follow-up mailing and to secure each respondent's grade point average from the student master file. Participants were guaranteed that their individual response to the survey would be kept confidential. A reminder postcard was sent to all persons 10 days after the mailing of the questionnaire. A second copy of the survey was sent soon afterwards to all non-respondents.

During the course of survey administration, it was discovered (on the basis of several chagrined and sometimes irate letters) that the original list included the names of 31 Miami alumni and at least 14 persons who had been involuntarily dropped by the University. Most of the persons in the former category graduated from Miami's medical-technology program, which requires participants to complete a one-year internship prior to graduation--during which they have no formal affiliation with the University. The unusual nature of this program was not taken into account when the roster of names was compiled by the computer. Very regretfully, the survey was also sent to the homes of five deceased students. Action was taken to prevent this situation from arising in future surveys of this kind, in those cases in which the University is aware of a student's death. Of the remaining 1,026 persons who belonged in the sample and for whom correct addresses were attained, 644 returned the questionnaire in time for data processing for a response rate of 63 percent. It is interesting to note that former students as distant as Australia, El Salvador and Hong Kong answered the survey. Computer processing of the survey results was performed by Mark Lang, a junior in Systems Analysis.

The manner in which the former students completed the questionnaire strongly suggests that they took the investigation seriously and gave some thought to the answers they provided. More than 90 percent of the persons who mailed back questionnaires wrote an answer to the key open-ended item concerning their main reason for dropping out of Miami. Some respondents submitted extensive explanations for their decision to leave--and one ex-student even composed a poem on the subject. Quite a few respondents expressed appreciation for Miami's interest in their opinions and hoped the survey would be successful. Some individuals wanted to learn the results of the survey and one former student even inquired about the

procedures for seeking readmission to Miami. In short, the survey seems to have generated a considerable degree of interest and cooperation.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents - Because a large proportion of the targeted population participated in the study, it was expected that there would be a strong congruence between the respondents and all members of the class of 1978. A comparison between the two groups on the basis of two characteristics--sex and academic division--demonstrate that this is essentially true.

Table 1. Comparison of Selected Characteristics of Dropouts Who Responded to the Survey With Those of All Dropouts in the Class of 1978

Characteristic	Survey Respondents (N=644)	All Dropouts (N=1,210)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	42%	46%
Female	58	54
<b>Academic Division</b>		
Arts and Science	47	49
Business	19	17
Education	20	18
Fine Arts	7	6
Applied Science	4	5
Interdisciplinary Studies	3	5

A somewhat greater percentage of women returned the questionnaire than would have been anticipated for Miami dropouts as a whole. There were also slightly more business and education majors and slightly fewer students from Arts and Science and from Interdisciplinary Studies in the sample than exists in the population.

## WHY STUDENTS LEAVE: A SUMMARY LOOK

Perhaps the most revealing question on the survey is the open-ended item which asks students to describe their main reason for leaving Miami. Responses to this question were organized into one of eight categories on the basis of content. These topical groups, and a brief description of the type of factors which they encompass, are below. Presented in parentheses beside each category is the percentage of students who named it as the primary reason for their withdrawal. Some caution should be exercised in considering these percentages since, as will be seen below, there were dramatic differences between the responses of students who left Miami with a 2.0 grade average or above and those who withdrew with less than a 2.0.

1. Curriculum (28%) - Students who withdrew because they switched their major or field to one not offered at Miami, they found another school which suited them better academically, or they were not happy with the number or quality of course offerings in their major.
2. Personal Circumstances (17%) - Undergraduates who dropped out primarily for personal reasons--most of which were only marginally related to Miami. These included marriage, illness, family matters, or desire to move closer to home.
3. Motivation (14%) - Students who left because they lost interest in college. Individuals who were uncertain about their academic and career goals, were dubious of the worth of a degree, or were interested in some other pursuit (like finding a job) fell into this category.
4. Student Life (13%) - Undergraduates who dropped out mainly because they felt out of place with other students or Miami's conservative atmosphere, were displeased with the social life and relationships, or disliked certain rules and regulations pertaining to student conduct.
5. Academic Ability (11%) - Students who left mainly because of disappointment with their academic performance, the difficulty of courses at Miami, or the intensity of competition among students.
6. Financial Concerns (7%) - Students whose decision to leave was triggered by a lack of funds to continue their education at Miami, an inability to obtain sufficient financial support from the institution or their parents, and/or a desire to attend a less costly school.
7. Environmental Problems (6%) - Undergraduates who withdrew because of unhappiness with institutional characteristics of Miami (its size, perceived impersonality, and attitude of the staff toward students) and/or the small town atmosphere of Oxford.
8. Instruction (3%) - Persons who dropped out because of dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching at Miami, the availability of instructors to students, and the faculty/student ratio in classes.

The remainder of this section will be devoted to examining the respondents' principal reason for leaving on the basis of several characteristics: final grade point average, sex, academic division prior to withdrawal, length of enrollment at Miami, and overall satisfaction with the University. Although

there was interest in including race/ethnic identification in this analysis, this was precluded by the number of minority students in the sample (17)-- too small of a figure from which to draw meaningful and reliable conclusions. For all of the relationships discussed in the commentary accompanying each table, there is a statistically significant difference (at the .05 level using the chi square test) between the responses of a particular subgroup and the overall responses. This statistical standard is used for all demographic analyses in this report. In any case, the need for a test of significance is less important in this study than in most, since a sizable portion of the dropout population from the class of 1978 participated in the survey, thus almost insuring a low level of sampling error.

Students who left Miami in good academic standing (that is, with a grade average of at least a 2.0) varied sharply from those who did not in terms of their main reason for withdrawing from the University. Two-thirds of the "successful dropouts" (as those with a 2.0 or above will be referred to in this report) indicated that their decision to leave Miami was mainly related to either curriculum, personal or student life matters. In contrast, 60 percent of the "unsuccessful dropouts" (students who earned less than a 2.0) cited the factors of academic ability and motivation. There were also differences among the successful dropouts. Considerably fewer students with a 2.0 to 2.49 left Miami for curriculum reasons than did undergraduates with a higher average. In addition, factors relating to personal circumstances were more important causes of attrition for students with a 3.0 or better than for undergraduates with lower GPA's.

Table 2. Main Reasons Which Successful and Unsuccessful Dropouts Had For Leaving Miami

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u> (2.0 or above)	<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u> (Below 2.0)
Curriculum	34%	7%
Personal Circumstances	18	13
Motivation	11	25
Student Life	15	7
Academic Ability	5	35
Financial Concerns	8	4
Environmental Problems	6	4
Instruction	3	5
	(N=475)	(N=137)

**Table 3. Main Reasons Which Students with a 2.0 or Above Grade Average Had for Leaving Miami**

	<u>3.5 to 4.0</u>	<u>3.0 to 3.49</u>	<u>2.5 to 2.99</u>	<u>2.0 to 2.49</u>
Curriculum	51%	36%	43%	19%
Personal Circumstances	21	25	16	16
Motivation	3	6	11	16
Student Life	15	15	15	16
Academic Ability	5	1	4	8
Financial Concerns	3	6	6	13
Environmental Problems	3	6	3	9
Instruction	0	4	3	3
	(N=39)	(N=108)	(N=174)	(N=154)

A greater percentage of women than men left Miami because of personal circumstances, while a higher proportion of male students withdrew for motivational reasons. Other than this, the differences between the two sexes were minor. The largest number of students from every academic division, except the School of Business, cited curriculum as their chief reason for leaving Miami; business majors mentioned this factor much less often, and it ranked only fifth among the eight categories of reasons for withdrawing. The most important causes of attrition for business students were personal and scholastic.

**Table 4. Main Reasons Which Men and Women Had for Leaving Miami**

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Curriculum	25%	30%
Personal Circumstances	11	21
Motivation	18	11
Student Life	11	15
Academic Ability	14	10
Financial Concerns	8	7
Environmental Problems	7	5
Instruction	5	2
	(N=262)	(N=357)

**Table 5. Main Reasons Which Students from Different Academic Divisions Had for Leaving Miami**

	<u>Arts &amp; Science</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>Fine Arts</u>	<u>Applied Science</u>	<u>Inter-disciplinary Studies</u>	<u>Un-classified</u>
Curriculum	33%	25%	10%	35%	38%	59%	27%
Personal Circumstances	14	24	26	14	8	12	10
Motivation	13	17	13	11	13	0	17
Student Life	15	12	12	8	4	12	18
Academic Ability	10	6	21	14	13	0	13
Financial Concerns	8	9	7	8	4	0	4
Environmental Problems	5	5	6	5	13	12	8
Instruction	2	3	5	5	8	6	4
	(N=253)	(N=106)	(N=100)	(N=37)	(N=24)	(N=17)	(N=78)

Members of the class of 1978 who dropped out of Miami before the end of their freshman year (but after the completion of at least one term) were more motivated by personal and scholastic factors and less induced by curriculum reasons than were students who withdrew at later stages of their college career.

Table 6. Main Reasons Which Students Had for Leaving Miami (on the Basis of Length of Enrollment)

	<u>Less Than 1 Term</u>	<u>1 Term To 1 Year</u>	<u>1 Year To 2 Years</u>	<u>2 Years To 3 Years</u>	<u>3 Years Or More</u>
Curriculum	7%	14%	29%	39%	24%
Personal Circumstances	20	24	14	14	26
Motivation	47	14	13	14	10
Student Life	13	11	17	12	4
Academic Ability	13	17	9	10	16
Financial Concerns	0	8	9	5	10
Environmental Problems	0	8	6	5	4
Instruction	0	5	3	2	6
	(N=15)	(N=111)	(N=268)	(N=173)	(N=50)

One of the final questions on the survey was the following: "Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your experience at Miami?" The responses: 27 percent were very satisfied; 27 percent, somewhat satisfied; 11 percent, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 19 percent, somewhat dissatisfied; and 15 percent, very dissatisfied. Hence, despite their decision to leave Miami, a majority of the dropouts from the class of 1978 seemed at least relatively pleased with the University. Not surprisingly, successful dropouts left with a more positive impression of Miami (59% satisfied, 33% dissatisfied) than did unsuccessful dropouts (40% satisfied, 39% dissatisfied). Men and women differed very little, as did students from the various academic divisions, in their responses to this question. Of the students who indicated that they were "very satisfied" with their Miami experience, a greater percentage left for curriculum or personal reasons than did other respondents; more than two-thirds of the "very satisfied" students cited one of these factors. Of the respondents who described themselves as "very dissatisfied," a larger number left the University for reasons related to student life than for any other single factor. In contrast, student life ranked only fourth among the eight reasons for withdrawal among all survey participants. Almost half of the persons who were very displeased with their

experience at Miami indicated that they left because of student life or environmental concerns.

Table 7. Main Reasons Which Students Had for Leaving Miami (on the Basis of Their Degree of Satisfaction with Their Overall Miami Experience)

	<u>Very Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Neither Dissatisfied Nor Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Satisfied</u>	<u>Very Satisfied</u>
Curriculum	18%	27%	6%	30%	41%
Personal Circumstances	2	8	24	17	28
Motivation	6	10	24	19	12
Student Life	34	21	17	6	2
Academic Ability	15	14	18	11	6
Financial Concerns	3	3	5	11	9
Environmental Problems	12	13	5	4	0
Instruction	11	4	2	2	1
	(N=95)	(N=117)	(N=66)	(N=167)	(N=170)

Much of the remainder of the survey report will be devoted to exploring in greater depth the reasons which prompted students to withdraw from Miami. This will involve examining the extent to which the factors in the first section of the questionnaire contributed to the respondents' decision to withdraw from Miami. For ease of analysis, the discussion of these factors has been organized on the basis of the categories introduced earlier, with each item assigned to the group it best fits. In presenting the findings, the responses of successful dropouts were arranged separately from those of the unsuccessful dropouts. This was because of the striking difference between the two groups in terms of their reasons for leaving the University. The responses to the forced-choice items are accompanied by selected comments written in reaction to the open-ended questions. The particular remarks which are quoted below were intended to be illustrative of the range of viewpoints held by the survey participants, and not strictly representative of the number of times a specific opinion was offered.

#### REASONS PERTAINING TO CURRICULUM

More than one-third of the successful dropouts indicated that their decision to withdraw was due primarily to courses and academic programs. No other factor was mentioned more frequently than this one. Though generally pleased with their experience at Miami, many of these students decided to change their majors to fields which either were not offered at the University or were offered more

extensively at other institutions. Engineering and health-related professions (particularly nursing) were mentioned most often by survey participants. Of the students who left for curriculum-related reasons, almost half stated that Miami could have changed or done something to convince them to stay. However, in almost all cases, this would require institution of an academic program which Miami does not have or the extension of a current program.

The following table contains the percentage of students who reported that certain forced-choice items were a major or moderate reason for their decision to leave Miami and whether there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of successful and unsuccessful dropouts.

Table 8. Extent to Which Successful and Unsuccessful Dropouts Considered Factors Related to Curriculum Important Reasons for Leaving Miami

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u> (2.0 and above)		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u> (Below 2.0)		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Found another college which was better for me for academic reasons	33%	12%	13%	7%	**
Desired major or academic program not offered at Miami	32	6	10	7	**
Inadequate course offerings in my major	18	10	7	7	**
Required to take courses I didn't want	5	9	16	18	**
Dissatisfaction with the quality of courses in my major	10	9	6	9	
Closed out of the courses I wanted	4	6	7	12	*
Course work not challenging	?	2	1	3	

\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

One out of every three students who left Miami in good academic standing cited these two factors as major reasons for their withdrawal: (1) desired major or academic program not offered at Miami, (2) found another college which was better for me for academic reasons. Almost one-fifth of the students blamed inadequate courses in their field as a major cause of their departure from Miami. Business students emphasized these factors much less than did undergraduates from other academic divisions. Selected reasons for withdrawal:

I decided that physics involved too much theory to get a practical job. I then decided to pursue engineering. After enrolling in Miami's engineering tech, I found it to be unchallenging and over simplified, so I transferred to Ohio State University.

Miami did not offer an undergraduate nursing program for the fulfillment of the B.S.N. degree at the Oxford campus.

I wanted to study electrical engineering. It was not available at Miami.

I left Miami University because I was interested in gaining admittance to veterinary school. Therefore I went to OSU where courses oriented to this end were available.

I could advance no further in my field until I got some classes I needed. I was closed out of every course in my major. To stay I would have wasted an entire quarter and a lot of money. I thought (and still do) that this was typical of Miami.

My academic major was optometry and this was the wrong college to attend in order to become an optometrist.

When I enrolled I was not sure of a major. After I decided I discovered Miami did not offer a degree program in that field. I transferred to a university that did.

I would not have been satisfied with an Arts and Science degree. I wanted to walk away from school with a skill or knowledge to obtain a job in my field. So I transferred to a technical school in dental hygiene.

Far fewer unsuccessful dropouts left Miami because they were unable to get the academic training they wanted. However, a greater percentage of these students indicated that they had withdrawn at least partly because they were required to take courses they did not want or were closed out of desired courses.

It should not be surprising to learn that the overwhelming proportion of students who withdrew for curriculum reasons stated that they left planning to transfer to either another four-year institution or, in a distinct minority of cases, to a junior college or a community college. Indeed, 61 percent of all the respondents reported that they left with the intention of attending another four-year school, and an additional 6 percent indicated that they planned to enroll at a junior or community college. Hence, two-thirds of the

students whom Miami failed to retain apparently decided to pursue a post-secondary education elsewhere. A list of the specific four-year colleges and universities to which the survey participants transferred or planned to transfer is in the appendices.

#### REASONS PERTAINING TO PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Almost one-fifth of the successful dropouts withdrew from Miami primarily for reasons over which the institution had little or no control. Included in this category are students who got married, moved out of state with their parents, transferred to a school closer to home, developed health problems, or encountered family difficulties. Examples in the words of the survey participants themselves:

I loved Miami U., the residence hall life, and the classes. The only reason I withdrew was because I got married and had to transfer to another school closer to Canton, where I moved after my marriage.

I had too many personal and prolonged problems at home. Found it very difficult to attend class during excursions home. Parental pressures.

I was glad I was able to go away to school, but I realized everything that mattered to me was back home.

I was planning to be married in summer of 1975, fiancée had a stable job with needed benefits, BGSU is only 30 miles from hometown and I was offered employment which permitted college courses to be structured as to my needs.

By an overwhelming margin, undergraduates who left for personal reasons seemed basically satisfied with their experience at Miami--and many expressed regret that they could not stay. Said one student who switched to a college near the residence of her boyfriend: "The decision had little to do with the school, academic or otherwise. Miami is still, in my opinion, the best school in the state of Ohio." Few of the respondents thought that the University could have changed or done anything to retain them. One person who left chiefly for "personal and family reasons" summed up the general feeling by saying, "No--well maybe--if you moved the campus to Cleveland."

Of the students whose withdrawal was motivated by personal circumstances, more than two-thirds indicated that they planned to enroll in another school. This helps to explain why nearly one-third of the successful dropouts cited the following as a major reason for their decision to leave: Found another college which was better for me for personal reasons. Unsuccessful dropouts found this factor considerably less important. There was little difference between the two sets of students on the remaining items in the table below. However, a noticeably greater percentage of women than men reported that marriage intentions and personal reasons having nothing to do with Miami played a major role in their decision to drop out.

**Table 9. Personal Circumstances**

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Found another college which was better for me for personal reasons	31%	15%	13%	10%	**
Personal reasons having nothing to do with Miami	23	14	20	17	
Emotional or social problems	8	11	12	12	
Change of educational plans due to marriage or marital intentions	9	3	8	4	
Illness, personal or family	3	1	3	4	

\*\*  $p < .01$

**REASONS PERTAINING TO MOTIVATION**

One characteristic typifies all of the students in this group: a lack of commitment to a college education--or at least one at Miami. Many of these individuals seemed confused about where they were going in life, were unsure about their field of study or career goals, or were simply unprepared for the rigors of college. Others felt that college was a waste of time and money for them, admitted that they were not eager to come to Miami in the first place, or concluded that they could fulfill their ambitions without additional education. As a consequence, they dropped out. Most, according to the survey results, intended to go to work or had no firm plans at the time they left Miami.

One-fourth of the unsuccessful dropouts explained their decision to leave in these terms, the second most frequently mentioned reason among this group of students. In contrast, only 11 percent of the successful dropouts left Miami primarily for motivational considerations. The following comments illustrate the explanations which students in this category gave for their withdrawal from Miami:

I had no specific goals. I needed something with a practical application, or something to do, in the "real" world. In a way I guess I wasn't ready for college (or ever will be).

I didn't want to be in school. I had a need of personal freedom and an insatiable desire to see the world on the street level not through idealistic classroom stuffiness.

I was confused and disillusioned about education and my own goals and needed the time off to settle some important questions for myself.

I didn't have a major course of study. I thought one would appear that would interest me. I felt I was wasting time and money for an unknown reason.

I was and still am undecided about what I want to take up as a profession and was therefore very unsure about what to take and felt that I was wasting time.

I had a building business back home that had come upon lean times. This was a perfect time to get some college education which I wanted. I didn't need a degree. So I went the one year I had planned to.

When I came to Miami as a freshman, I didn't know what to major in and never got anyone to help steer me in the right direction.

I wasn't sufficiently motivated to pursue the work because I wasn't sure my career goals necessitated a college degree. I went because my parents wanted me to (the wrong reason).

I was not interested in the major I selected and decided that experience in the working world would be more valuable. I felt pressured to select a major too quickly.

Although a solid majority of the students who left for motivational reasons appeared satisfied with their experience at Miami, several respondents criticized the University for not providing freshmen with enough assistance in career planning. One typical observation: "When I first entered Miami University, I was not properly scheduled. There was no one to really talk to about what courses would be appropriate for me. I would have liked someone in my department to take a personal interest in my career planning." Another former student who dropped out of Miami before completing a single term indicated that she might have stayed in school "if there was some sort of career counseling (to help me decide) if the field I chose was what I really wanted." This student said she left Miami because "I didn't have any idea as to what I wanted for a career. I was more or less 'forced' into education by my guidance counselor." One survey participant proposed "a pre-enrollment, mandatory career counseling session" saying, "it would have made a big difference (for me)."

The responses to the structured questions demonstrate further that unsuccessful dropouts were more prone to leave Miami for motivational reasons than were their academically successful counterparts.

**Table 10. Motivation**

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Changed my career objectives	26%	12%	15%	12%	*
Not ready for college	2	3	22	21	**
Doubt about the value of obtaining a college degree	2	7	9	14	**
Was bored with college	1	7	6	9	
Wanted a vacation from schooling	4	3	4	7	**
Fulfilled my personal educational goals	6	4	1	3	
Accepted a job	2	2	9	1	**

\*\* p<.01

\* p<.05

**FACTORS PERTAINING TO STUDENT LIFE**

Some students leave a college or university because they find it incompatible with their social needs or personal life styles. From the survey results, it is evident that Miami has had its share of these individuals. Fifteen percent of the successful dropouts and 7 percent of the unsuccessful dropouts left primarily because of unhappiness with the social climate and relationships at Miami, the character of the student body, and the school's rules and regulations, particularly those pertaining to residence hall living and student use of a motor vehicle. A sizable number of ex-students complained that fraternity and sorority affairs are over-emphasized at Miami, and that persons not involved in a Greek-letter organization face social isolation and stagnation. Unfortunately, there was no forced-choice item in the first section of the survey such as, "dissatisfaction with the fraternity/sorority orientation of the campus." So there is no way of gauging the precise number of students who would have considered this factor a major reason for their withdrawal. However, from the frequency and the tone of the written responses, the percentage is not likely to be low. What is clear is that very few of these students dropped out because they were unable to get into a Greek-letter organization; only 1 percent of the respondents cited this as a major cause of their departure.

Although the fraternity and sorority milieu at Miami may contribute to some

degree to student attrition, other figures in this survey suggest that Greek-letter organizations may serve as retention agents for their members. According to data obtained from the Office of Co-Curricular Programs, an average 25 percent of the student body belonged to a social fraternity or sorority between 1974 and 1978. Yet, only 15 percent of the dropouts in this study were affiliated with a Greek-letter organization while at Miami. In other words, there was a significantly higher attrition rate among Independents than Greeks at Miami. Although one cannot prove from this finding that fraternities and sororities were even partially, much less primarily, responsible for the higher degree of persistence among their members, it certainly stands to reason that the strong personal ties and loyalties that develop within these organizations serve as a powerful incentive for a student to stay.

Explanations which students in this category gave for their decision to withdraw:

The atmosphere socially was inadequate and restrictive. Too many rules and regulations in dorms and on campus (curfews with girls, car restrictions, etc.). Also, I didn't want to have to join a fraternity in order to have a good time.

I found Miami University to be too much like high school. Many people were fairly snobbish due to heavy Greek influence. I saw many of the people I knew as a freshman completely change their personalities and values as a result of trying to get into a fraternity or being accepted.

My hometown was 4 hours away and since Miami restricted ownership of cars, the bus service was very much below normal requirements, and there were no airports for miles, it was very difficult to get home. You had to trust some stranger to bring you home, if you were able to find someone going your direction.

The emphasis on the Greek system...detracted from an open and friendly atmosphere on campus. It also made it difficult for the many students who chose not to go Greek to feel any close involvement with Miami as a total University--socially and academically.

The whole atmosphere is too sterile; it was like the 50's reincarnated--with emphasis on fraternity activities...I did not click with the cliques--fraternities and all American type beer drinking boys and girls.

I felt that the school put too much emphasis on rules and regulations and appearances rather than on students' needs.

The atmosphere and people were too snobby and it was too strict an atmosphere. It was like having my parents with me every minute and seriously it was the worst year of my life.

I was a Jewish girl from New York who did not fit in at all in a moderately provincial and Midwestern school. Plus I couldn't deal with all the sorority stuff. It was too phony.

I was nineteen years old, ready for independence and privacy. I didn't get either in our freshman dorm.

I felt "out of place" at Miami. It is very much a sorority/fraternity oriented school. For this reason, I didn't feel at ease socially.

For a school its size, Miami has very little to offer. Most students can be accurately described as conservative, upper middle-class clones.

Several students who identified themselves as commuters indicated that they withdrew because of the poor attitude which they felt the University and its students held toward commuters. Samples:

I was a commuter. You treated commuters like aliens. You gave us one little room in the Res as a place to be together. Students living on campus were snobs toward commuters. I should have charged them \$10 a head for a ride home.

As a commuting student (I) felt like an outcast. Student attitude towards commuters very poor.

From reading these remarks, it should come as no surprise to learn that more than two-thirds of the students who left Miami because of these concerns were dissatisfied with their overall experience at the University. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that a majority of these respondents indicated that there was something that Miami could have changed or done that might have persuaded them to stay. For most of these respondents, this would have required the removal of many of the restraints on personal freedom that they feel the University is imposing, and the offering of more activities for students not in a fraternity or sorority. More than three-fourths of the students in this category left with the intention of enrolling at another four-year institution (presumably one more in keeping with their social preferences).

With only one exception (study environment in the residence hall), there was little difference between the responses of successful and unsuccessful dropouts to the forced-choice items associated with this section.

**Table 11. Student Life**

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Too many rules and regulations	14%	10%	8%	14%	
Displeasure with residence hall facilities	7	8	8	7	
Felt out of place with other students	6	9	8	5	
Unpleasant social atmosphere in residence halls	7	7	8	7	
Miami regulation restricting student ownership and use of an automobile	5	7	4	8	
Poor study environment in residence halls	2	5	6	5	**
Inadequate extracurricular programs and activities	3	4	3	3	
Unable to get into a social sorority or fraternity	1	1	1	0	

\*\* p < .01

**REASONS PERTAINING TO ACADEMIC ABILITY**

Poor academic performance and the discouragement associated with it have long been recognized as a major cause of student attrition, and this is no exception at Miami. It is hardly a surprise to learn that the largest segment of unsuccessful dropouts (35%) attributed their withdrawal primarily to doubts about their scholastic ability. More than 60 percent of these students cited disappointment with their academic performance as a major or moderate reason for their decision to leave--compared with only 13 percent of the successful dropouts. There also was a significant difference between the way these groups perceived the importance of two other factors--size of classes and competition from peers; students who achieved below a 2.0 average at Miami felt these items had greater bearing on their decision to drop out.

**Table 12. Academic Ability**

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Disappointment with my academic performance	6%	7%	29%	33%	**
Competition among students too intense	5	7	9	14	**
Found courses too difficult	2	4	9	18	**

\*\* p<.01

**Explanations which students offered for their academic performance and withdrawal:**

The main reason was probably that I couldn't study--due to lack of motivation or self-discipline on my part. I didn't complete assignments so I fell behind in my courses.

As a student, I just wasn't ready for the full responsibility of college, and grades proved it!

My grades were bad, and I didn't want to try again and fail especially since I was financially being supported with my father's money.

I found that the academic advisers loaded me down with too many hours. 20 hours for a freshman is no good, and nobody advised or cared about the situation.

I did not live on campus (I lived at home) which made it very hard to fulfill my obligations that most courses left me with. Miami is set up for the student who resides on campus and does not take into consideration those who do not. Just look at the dropout rate of the people who commute! You will find that it is impossible for someone who has a responsible job to stay at Miami.

I didn't have proper high school courses to enter Miami and perform successfully academically. There was extreme pressure for me to get C's at Miami (I was ranked third in my high school graduating class).

Most of the students in this category did not feel that Miami could have done anything to prevent them from leaving, and many faulted themselves for their

failure to do better in school. Several respondents, however, thought that Miami could have done more in the counseling and advising area, and one ex-student believed that students should be briefed better on the academic expectations of college. "It seems that there ought to be a high school level program to make prospective students realize how much discipline is needed, the competition and impersonality at the college level," this individual said. "If there was some way to inform me of these facts, I might have been more ready for college."

Of the students who left Miami because of reasons pertaining to academic ability, 42 percent indicated that they planned to transfer to another four-year school, 32 percent said that they left with no firm plans, 17 percent expressed a desire to go to work, and 6 percent intended to enroll at a junior or community college. Thus, despite their scholastic difficulties at Miami, almost half of these students maintained a determination to attain advanced education.

#### REASONS PERTAINING TO FINANCIAL CONCERNS

Inability to pay the cost of education appears to be a less important cause of student attrition at Miami than at many other schools. Only 7 percent of the survey participants (8 percent of the successful dropouts and 4 percent of the unsuccessful dropouts) said they left primarily because they could not financially afford to continue at Miami or because they found it more economically advantageous to attend another institution. The responses to the open-ended questions and the data in Table 13 identify more precisely the nature of these financial circumstances and reasons for withdrawal.

I couldn't borrow or make enough money to afford 3 quarters at Miami with no financial worries during those 3 quarters. During my second quarter at Miami I realized I didn't have the money to continue. The worry about where to get the money to continue resulted in a "what the hell" attitude, my studies suffered and I dropped out.

I was denied sufficient financial aid which was due to my father's income. Hardly justifiable when it was not used to help me with my education.

My family stopped all financial assistance and I couldn't receive any from Miami. I would return today, if I could get the money.

My primary reason for leaving Miami was nothing against the University itself; instead I could save both my family and myself money by going to my hometown university.

My financial situation was one which either required more financial aid or move back to Columbus, attend OSU, and move in with my parents. Unfortunately, I was forced to choose the latter.

My parents moved to Southern California, and at that time I could receive in-state tuition and we were having financial difficulties.

Table 13. Financial Concerns

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>	
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>
Decision to go to a less expensive school than Miami	7%	10%	4%	8%
Family financial support to me was reduced or eliminated	6	6	9	5
Unable to obtain any financial assistance	6	4	6	3
Received financial assistance, but it was not sufficient	4	1	5	2
Inability to find a part-time job while at Miami	1	3	1	3

An overwhelming majority of the students who left because of monetary factors were satisfied with their experience at Miami and, from their comments, it is clear that many were pained at having to leave. Nevertheless, most conceded that Miami was helpless to do anything that would have made it possible for them to remain. Of the students in this category, 47 percent expressed interest in transferring to another four-year institution (undoubtedly, one that would be cheaper--either because of lower fees, in-state tuition, or avoidance of room and board costs), while 29 percent intended to look for employment.

#### REASONS PERTAINING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

In a "town-gown" sense, Miami presents its students with a mild paradox--a medium to large school located in a small-town setting. A handful of students (6 percent of the successful dropouts and 4 percent of the unsuccessful dropouts) found one or both of these features to be sufficiently unattractive to prompt their withdrawal. Some of these individuals felt lost in what they perceived as an uncaring, overly bureaucratized institution, while others felt cramped and isolated in the rustic setting of Oxford. Sample comments:

I was very dissatisfied with the small town atmosphere of Oxford. I felt trapped in my surroundings. In general, I felt that there was not enough variety, thus I was bored.

I felt I was not an individual but a number.

My two years at Miami were the worst of my life. Plagued not only with personal problems, the University made me feel that I was not a person.

Too large of a school in too small of a town.

Understandably, more than two-thirds of the students who left mainly because of these factors expressed dissatisfaction with their Miami experience. However, a slight majority of these individuals did feel that Miami could have prevented their withdrawal by somehow personalizing the educational process more and making it easier for students to escape the confinement of Oxford life.

Over two-thirds of the individuals in this category reported that they planned to continue their education at another four-year school (presumably a smaller institution or one located in a more cosmopolitan vicinity).

As the figures below indicate, the size and supposed impersonality of the University were more important determinants of the withdrawal of unsuccessful dropouts, while the small town atmosphere of Oxford was emphasized more heavily by scholastically successful respondents.

Table 14. Environmental Problems

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Disliked the small town atmosphere of Oxford	9%	11%	4%	4%	**
University offices not responsive to student complaints and problems	5	9	8	14	
Felt the University was too large and impersonal	5	5	9	12	**

\*\* p<.01

#### REASONS PERTAINING TO INSTRUCTION

Only a small portion of the former students (3 percent of the successful dropouts and 5 percent of the unsuccessful dropouts) ended their enrollment at Miami primarily because of dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching, the accessibility of instructors, and the size of classes. Noticeably greater importance was attached to the latter two items by students in the below 2.0 range than by those with better grade averages.

**Table 15. Instruction**

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>		<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>		
	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	
Classes too large for personal attention	4%	6%	12%	17%	**
Dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching	4	6	7	8	
Instructors not available to students	3	4	9	11	**

\*\* p<.01

Characteristic of the reasons which students gave for their decision to leave are the following:

I feel that personal attention was lacking tremendously and the instructors didn't care to try and help the students with problems. They figured the bad would weed out themselves.

I was not at all happy with the overcrowded classrooms. When there are so many students it's impossible to approach a teacher with your problems.

I feel the quality of teaching at Miami was, in most cases, inferior to the instruction I received in high school. I feel there is too much importance placed on faculty publishing, and this causes teachers to be too concerned with their own studies. Main importance should be placed on quality teaching.

Faculty preoccupied with making courses hard rather than passing along their knowledge and challenging the student's ability in a fair way.

I felt that the majority of professors were not too interested in the students' education. I didn't feel it was worth the investment for the amount of education I received.

Not surprisingly, about three-fourths of the students who left because of unhappiness with instruction were negatively inclined toward Miami. However, most of the respondents stated that they may have stayed if certain changes were instituted. Most frequently suggested was more personal attention from faculty members.

## CONSULTATION AND THE DECISION TO LEAVE

Literature on student attrition has concluded that a person's decision to drop out of college usually is not hastily made in the midst of a crisis, but rather is gradually reached over a period of time. From whom do students seek counsel before taking this potentially momentous step in their careers? To determine the answer to this question in terms of the class of 1978 at Miami, the survey participants were asked to identify the individuals from whom they sought advice concerning their decision to withdraw. Their responses are in Table 16. There was no statistically significant difference between successful and unsuccessful dropouts on any of these items.

Table 16. Percentage of Successful and Unsuccessful Dropouts Who Sought Assistance from Certain Individuals Concerning Their Decision to Leave Miami

	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>	<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>
A faculty member	19%	20%
Dean or administrator	7	10
College counselor	15	14
Residence hall staff member	17	24
Fellow student	30	30
Sought advice from none of these individuals	54	57

(Figures total to more than 100 percent, since some respondents consulted more than one individual.)

Most of the respondents apparently did not seek the advice of either a staff member or a fellow student in reaching their decision to leave Miami. And the greatest number of those students who did talk with someone prior to making up their mind spoke with another student, not with a faculty or staff person. Indeed, less than one-fourth of the respondents in both groups indicated that they had sought guidance from either a faculty member, an administrator, a counselor, or a residence hall staff member about their decision to leave school. A greater percentage of women than men (34% to 25%) sought advice from a fellow student; otherwise, there were no differences of any consequence between the two sexes in terms of whom they consulted prior to leaving the University.

## STUDENT USE OF AND SATISFACTION WITH SELECTED UNIVERSITY SERVICES

How pleased students are with the key services of a college can be an important determinant of whether they choose to continue at that school or become an attrition statistic. For this reason, participants in this survey were asked to relate their experience with several services at Miami and, if they had received assistance, to indicate whether or not they were generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of help they got. The responses of successful and unsuccessful dropouts are presented below.

Table 17. Percentage of Successful and Unsuccessful Dropouts Who Received Assistance from the University with Respect to Several Services and the Percentage of These Students Who Were Satisfied with the Help They Got

	<u>Received Assistance</u>		<u>Was Satisfied with Service</u>	
	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>	<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>	<u>Successful Dropouts</u>	<u>Unsuccessful Dropouts</u>
Academic advising received from a residence hall Freshman Adviser	55%	63%	73%	75%
Academic advising received from a faculty member	58	54	70	46
Counseling received from the Counseling Service	22	21	68	41
Help in obtaining financial aid or a part-time job	28	19	58	56
Help in improving study skills or abilities in reading, writing or math	14	34	59	42
Counseling to help with your career planning	35	30	46	50
Medical care received at the Student Health Service	64	54	70	77

A majority of both sets of students indicated that they had received academic advice from a Freshman Adviser and a faculty member. About three-fourths of the persons from both groups who obtained help from a Freshman Adviser were satisfied with the assistance they got. However, successful and unsuccessful dropouts varied sharply in their perceptions of the quality of academic advising provided by the faculty: although more than two-thirds of the students in the former category were happy with the advising they received from faculty, most

of the members of the latter group were dissatisfied. There were no meaningful differences in the responses of students to these items on the basis of academic division, sex, or length of enrollment.

With the exception of the Student Health Service, only a minority of the respondents sought the use of the other services examined in this study. For those students who had received counseling from the Student Counseling Service and help in improving study and other fundamental skills, the pattern of responses resembled the item on faculty advising: a solid majority of successful dropouts were satisfied with the help they got, while most of the unsuccessful dropouts were not. Neither group was particularly pleased with the career counseling it had received (this was the only service in which a majority of the successful dropouts was dissatisfied). This finding supports the written comments made by a number of respondents who withdrew for "motivational" reasons. It is interesting to note, however, that only about one-third of the students (41% of the women and 28% of the men) sought career guidance. Of those unsuccessful dropouts who indicated that they did not seek help with academic advising, counseling or improvement of basic skills, a larger percentage conceded, in retrospect, that they had needed such assistance. Most of the respondents who got help in obtaining financial aid or a part-time job and a substantial portion of those who received medical care at Wade MacMillan expressed satisfaction with these services.

#### CONCLUSION

As is true in every institution of higher education, students drop out of Miami for a myriad of reasons--some too complex to be easily reduced to a simple set of categories such as those used in this study. Yet, it is believed that the results of this survey provides a highly accurate portrait of the factors which cause about a third of the students who enter Miami to leave before graduation day.

For most of the members of the class of 1978 who withdrew before earning a baccalaureate, Miami was a satisfying experience. The greatest number of students who chose not to complete their studies here decided to major in a field either not available at the University or offered more extensively elsewhere. Most of these individuals were pleased with the time they spent at Miami--but thought their career and academic goals would be served better by transferring to another institution. The widely-held, pejorative image of the college dropout as a person who has wasted his time and probably his parents' money by failing to finish his education is a most unfair description, at least for Miami's ex-students: more than two-thirds of these individuals left Oxford planning to enroll in another college or university--ranging from a technical school to the University of California, Berkeley. Many of the respondents who were displeased with their life at Miami were persons who could not adapt to the milieu and character of the institution--its conservative traditions and conduct regulations; its homogeneous, middle-to-upperclass student body; and its strong Greek-letter organizations and their domination of the campus' social affairs. These students, finding themselves out of place environmentally and socially, chose to migrate rather than adjust. Like at other schools, many students, particularly those with low grade

averages, left because of a sense of uncertainty in their lives, a lack of direction about their major or career objectives, a doubt about the necessity of a college degree, or a loss of interest in their studies. Still other students withdrew because of disappointment with their scholastic performance, frustration with the stiff academic competition, unhappiness with their instructors--or for a variety of personal or financial reasons.

Although the class of 1978 contained a greater portion of students in the lower academic ranges than is normal at Miami, it would be unreasonable to conclude that it was totally uncharacteristic of other classes. Hence, the data gathered by this survey provides the most reliable information collected to date about the reasons undergraduates leave Miami.

## APPENDIX A

Extent to which survey items were a reason for the decision of successful dropouts (those with a grade average of 2.0 or above) to leave Miami. The factors are listed in order of the mean score (4 = major reason, 3 = moderate reason, 2 = minor reason, 1 = not a reason).

	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Minor Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
Found another college which was better for me for personal reasons	46%	8%	15%	31%	2.31
Found another college which was better for me for academic reasons	49	6	12	33	2.29
Personal reasons having nothing to do with Miami	46	16	14	23	2.15
Desired major or academic program not offered at Miami	57	5	6	32	2.14
Changed my career objectives	51	11	12	26	2.14
Inadequate course offerings in my major	65	7	10	18	1.81
Too many rules and regulations	64	11	10	14	1.74
Emotional or social problems	67	14	11	8	1.61
Disliked the small town atmosphere of Oxford	70	10	11	9	1.59
Dissatisfaction with quality of courses in my major	72	8	9	10	1.58
University offices not responsive to student complaints and problems	72	14	9	5	1.49
Displeasure with residence hall facilities	75	10	8	7	1.48
Decision to go to a less expensive school than Miami	77	6	10	7	1.47
Required to take courses I didn't want.	73	12	9	5	1.47
Felt out of place with other students	75	10	9	6	1.46

	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Minor Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
Disappointment with my academic performance	73	14	7	6	1.46
Unpleasant social atmosphere in residence hall	77	9	7	7	1.43
Miami regulation restricting student ownership and use of an automobile	76	12	7	5	1.41
Competition among students too intense	78	10	7	5	1.40
Felt the University was too large and impersonal	78	11	5	5	1.38
Change of educational plans due to marriage or marital intentions	85	2	3	9	1.37
Family financial support to me was reduced or eliminated	82	5	6	6	1.37
Classes too large for personal attention	80	10	6	4	1.34
Dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching	80	10	6	4	1.34
Unable to obtain any financial assistance	84	6	4	6	1.32
Closed out of the courses I wanted	82	8	6	4	1.32
Instructors not available to students	82	10	4	3	1.30
Fulfilled my personal educational goals	86	4	4	6	1.29
Wanted a vacation from schooling	84	9	3	4	1.28
Doubt about the value of obtaining a college degree	84	7	7	2	1.28
Was bored with college	81	11	7	1	1.28
Inadequate extracurricular programs and activities	87	6	4	3	1.24

	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Minor Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
Poor study environment in residence hall	87	6	5	2	1.23
Found courses too difficult	88	7	4	2	1.20
Not ready for college	88	7	3	2	1.20
Received financial assistance, but it was not sufficient	93	2	1	4	1.16
Inability to find a part-time job while at Miami	92	3	3	1	1.15
Illness, personal or family	93	2	1	3	1.14
Course work not challenging	93	3	2	2	1.13
Accepted a job	94	2	2	2	1.13
Unable to get into a social sorority or fraternity	97	1	1	1	1.06

## APPENDIX B

Degree to which survey items were a reason for the decision of unsuccessful dropouts (those with less than a 2.0 grade average) to withdraw from Miami. The factors are presented in order of the mean score.

	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Minor Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
Disappointment with my academic performance	17	21	33	29	2.74
Not ready for college	41	16	21	22	2.24
Personal reasons having nothing to do with Miami	46	17	17	20	2.10
Required to take courses I didn't want	46	20	18	16	2.04
Changed my career objectives	57	16	12	15	1.86
Classes too large for personal attention	54	18	17	12	1.86
Found courses too difficult	51	23	18	9	1.84
Emotional or social problems	55	20	12	12	1.82
Doubt about the value of obtaining a college degree	61	17	14	9	1.70
Competition among students too intense	63	14	14	9	1.69
Felt the University was too large and impersonal	65	14	12	9	1.65
Instructors not available to students	65	15	11	9	1.64
Too many rules and regulations	66	12	14	8	1.64
University offices not responsive to student complaints and problems	68	10	14	8	1.62
Found another college which was better for me for personal reasons	74	4	10	13	1.61
Found another college which was better for me for academic reasons	72	8	7	13	1.61

	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Minor Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
Closed out of the courses I wanted	72%	9%	12%	7%	1.56
Was bored with college	70	15	9	6	1.52
Desired major or academic program not offered at Miami	76	7	7	10	1.51
Dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching	72	13	8	7	1.49
Family financial support to me was reduced or eliminated	76	9	5	9	1.48
Displeasure with residence hall facilities	75	10	7	8	1.48
Felt out of place with other students	74	13	5	8	1.48
Wanted a vacation from schooling	69	20	7	4	1.46
Unpleasant social atmosphere in residence hall	79	7	7	8	1.44
Dissatisfaction with quality of courses in my major	78	6	9	6	1.44
Poor study environment in residence hall	75	14	5	6	1.43
Miami regulation restricting student ownership and use of an automobile	74	14	8	4	1.42
Inadequate course offerings in my major	80	7	7	7	1.41
Accepted a job	85	5	1	9	1.35
Decision to go to a less expensive school than Miami	81	7	8	4	1.35
Change of educational plans due to marriage or marital intentions	88	1	4	8	1.32
Unable to obtain any financial assistance	83	8	3	6	1.32

	<u>Not a Reason</u>	<u>Minor Reason</u>	<u>Moderate Reason</u>	<u>Major Reason</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>
Disliked the small town atmosphere of Oxford	86	5	4	4	1.28
Received financial assistance, but it was not sufficient	89	4	2	5	1.24
Illness, personal or family	88	5	4	3	1.23
Inadequate extracurricular programs and activities	87	7	3	3	1.22
Inability to find a part-time job while at Miami	92	4	3	1	1.14
Fulfilled my personal educational goals	93	3	3	1	1.14
Course work not challenging	94	1	3	1	1.12
Unable to get into a social sorority or fraternity	94	5	0	1	1.08

## APPENDIX C

### Listing of Colleges and Universities to Which Students Planned to Transfer

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<u>Number of Students Transferring</u>	<u>School</u>
113	Ohio State University
26	Kent State University
25	University of Cincinnati
19	Cleveland State University
13	Bowling Green State University
10	Wright State University
9	University of Akron
	University of Toledo
7	Ohio University
6	University of Maryland
5	Indiana University
	Youngstown State University
4	Arizona State University
	Colorado State University
	Northwestern University
	Purdue University
	University of Michigan
3	Case Western Reserve
	Lake Erie College
	Otterbein College
	University of Dayton
	University of Illinois
	University of Kentucky
	Wittenberg University
2	Ball State University
	Capital University
	Iowa State University
	North Texas State University
	Ohio Northern University
	Thomas More College
	University of Florida
	University of Montana
	Ursuline College
	Virginia State University
	Xavier University

Note: Institutions mentioned by only one respondent were not included.

## APPENDIX D

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Percentage and number of former students in each subgroup who participated in the survey. The figures for successful and unsuccessful dropouts are combined.

	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>N</u>
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	42%	270
Female	58	371
 <u>Length of Enrollment at Miami</u>		
Less than one term	3%	17
One term, but less than a year	18	116
One year or more, but less than two years	43	274
Two years or more, but less than three years	28	180
Three years or more	8	51
 <u>Plans at Time of Withdrawal</u>		
I left intending to transfer to another four-year college or university	61%	387
I left intending to transfer to a junior college or a community college	6	36
I left intending to go to work	14	89
I left intending to travel or to participate in other informal learning activities	4	25
I left to enter military service	1	8
I left with no firm plans	13	80

	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>N</u>
<u>Whether Respondent Expected to Return</u>		
Yes	9%	56
No	72	458
Was uncertain at the time	19	122

Fraternity or Sorority Membership

Yes	15%	93
No	85	543

Race or Ethnic Identification

American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	7
Asian or Pacific Islander	*	2
Black	1	6
Hispanic	*	2
White	97	612

Academic Division

Arts and Science	41%	262
Business	16	105
Education	17	109
Fine Arts	6	40
Applied Science	4	25
Interdisciplinary Studies	3	17
Unclassified	12	79

\* Less than 1 percent

<u>Grade Point Average</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>N</u>
3.5 to 4.0	6%	40
3.0 to 3.49	18	113
2.5 to 2.99	28	179
2.0 to 2.49	25	161
Below 2.0	22	140

40