

**FACTORS AFFECTING DROPOUT RATES AND THE TIME TO COMPLETE  
THE UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OF STATISTICS IN PARANA - BRAZIL**

Nelva Maria Zibetti Sganzerla and Suely Ruiz Giolo  
Federal University of Parana, Brazil  
nelva@ufpr.br

Most government funded universities in Brazil have a shortage of vacancies for freshmen. These positions are mostly occupied by students who have reached a GPA (grade point average) in a test they take to enter the university – known in Brazil as vestibular. Though no tuition fees are paid, universities have experienced a high number of dropouts in several undergraduate courses and students have taken longer to graduate than the standard time limit.

In this work are assessed data from 1,219 Brazilian students, enrolled in the undergraduate Statistics course at the Federal University of the State of Parana, Brazil, between 1991 and 2005. The major causes for dropout and unsuccessful conclusion of the course in due time are analyzed. Furthermore, data from 242 students enrolled in the same course between 2006 and 2009 are also evaluated due to changes implemented for the vestibular and academic curriculum in 2006, bearing in mind the dropout rates.

Descriptive techniques such as frequency tables, bar plots, and line plots, as well as analytical procedures based on the Kaplan-Meier estimator (Kaplan and Meier, 1958) and Cox model (Cox, 1972; Klein and Moeschberger, 2003) are used to evaluate the data of these students taking into account their entrance exam in the university, the number of times to be approved in two basic disciplines of mathematical and statistical background, and their academic grades, among others.

Our findings show that several factors might influence the continuity of the students in the course. Some of the causes of students' failures to complete their degrees were: poor high school background leading to difficulties in certain disciplines and the lack of interest in the course chosen. Moreover, students admitted to the University through GPA in the vestibular have completed their courses in shorter time than those admitted by any other means. The increase in time is closely related to the difficulties faced in the approval of the two basic disciplines mentioned above.

**REFERENCES**

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