

# Front Range Community College Office of Institutional Research RESEARCH BRIEF – MARCH 2016

*Collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and delivering institutional information.*

## Impact of Stale Data and Auto-Conferred Awards on the VE-135 Graduate Survey

This research brief discusses the impacts of stale data introduced into the annual VE-135 graduate survey from surveying graduates with auto-conferred awards. Front Range Community College (FRCC) started granting certificates to students who had earned sufficient credits, but never submitted their graduation application. When the first auto-conferred degrees were granted during AY2014 there were only five graduates affected. In AY2015, however, there were 684 graduates with auto-conferred awards, and the sheer size of this cohort has introduced extra issues that affect the VE-135 response rate. The AY2015 VE-135 survey provides the first available data to study these effects. There will not be any auto-conferred awards during AY2016 due to a variety of reasons but the topic is on the table for implementing a new process in AY2017.

### Overview of the VE-135 Graduate Survey

The annual VE-135 graduate survey is mandated by Colorado Community College System (CCCS). The survey targets students who earned Career and Technical Education (CTE) awards in the prior academic year. Our academic year starts with the summer term and ends with the spring term. For example, the AY2015 graduate survey includes awards granted in summer 2014, fall 2014 and spring 2015.

One major challenge facing the VE-135 survey is the required survey timeline. The survey starts each year on December 15<sup>th</sup> with the final data submission required to CCCS by March 30<sup>th</sup>. This timeline means that students who earn their degree in the summer or fall terms have not been enrolled at FRCC for a year before we contact them for this survey. Even the most recent graduates (spring) have been gone for seven months. Another major challenge of the VE-135 survey is that each program at FRCC is expected to get a 50% response rate or higher. These challenges are exacerbated with auto-conferred graduates who may not have attended for 2-4 years

### AY2015 VE-135 Survey

The AY2015 VE-135 survey includes awards for 2,545 distinct students. 27% of these were auto-conferred.

Auto-conferred awards were predominately granted to students who have been away from FRCC longer than the typical graduate (7-16 months). More than 2/3 of the auto-conferred graduates were most recently enrolled in AY2013 or prior.

Last AY of Attendance	Typical Graduate		Auto-Conferred Graduate	
	#	%	#	%
2007	1	0%	0	0%
2011	3	0%	0	0%
2012	7	0%	253	37%
2013	3	0%	273	40%
2014	48	3%	129	19%
2015	1,270	68%	6	1%
2016	529	28%	23	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,861</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Effects of Stale Data

Graduates from many years ago present a problem when attempting to contact them for the VE-135 survey. After the student is no longer enrolled at FRCC they are unlikely to log into Banner and update their email address or phone numbers. This leaves us with stale data and an inability to get their responses to our survey. DQ Global has published an article and Infographic discussing the half-life of data and the negative impacts stale data has on business. The article and infographic can be [found here](#).

The following table illustrates one effect of the stale data that comes along with the auto-conferred graduates. Of the phone numbers available officially, 10% of the typical graduate cohort numbers are invalid, while 20% of auto-confer graduates are invalid. In addition, the auto-confer graduates are also more likely to opt-out of taking the survey entirely, even if their contact information is correct.

Award Type	Graduates	Phone Numbers Available	Invalid Phone Numbers		Opt-Out	
			#	%	#	%
Typical Graduate	1,861	2,847	292	10%	187	10%
Auto-Conferred	684	911	184	20%	111	16%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,545</b>	<b>3,758</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>12%</b>

Adding the campus level detail highlights some interesting differences. Important to note is that Boulder County and Westminster campuses have dedicated call centers plus a small handful of faculty callers. The Westminster campus, with the largest call center, also absorbs workload for degrees awarded to graduates from our Brighton Site and Online campus. The Larimer County surveys are all administered by Faculty or other staff.

Because of the mix of programs included in the auto-confer process, only 19% of Boulder county graduates were auto-conferred while Westminster and Larimer had 41% and 39% respectively.

Campus	Award Type	Graduates	Phone Numbers Available	Invalid Phone Numbers		Opt-Out	
				#	%	#	%
Boulder County	Typical Graduate	316	481	32	7%	22	7%
Boulder County	Auto-Conferred	59	79	12	15%	9	15%
Larimer County	Typical Graduate	718	1,104	82	7%	17	2%
Larimer County	Auto-Conferred	283	382	37	10%	19	7%
Westminster	Typical Graduate	827	1,262	178	14%	148	18%
Westminster	Auto-Conferred	342	450	135	30%	83	24%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>2,545</b>	<b>3,758</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>12%</b>

## Impact on Response Rates

The critical impact on FRCC is hitting the expected response rate of 50% for each program. The table to the right shows that of our typical graduates we were able to reach an overall 56% response rate, while the auto-conferred graduates only made it to 22%. With the large population of auto-conferred graduates our final response rate was 47%, just shy of the target mark.

Award Type	Graduates	Responses	
	#	#	%
Typical Graduate	1,861	1,038	56%
Auto-Conferred	684	150	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,545</b>	<b>1,188</b>	<b>47%</b>

The following table shows the response rates by campus. All three campuses had a tough time collecting responses from auto-conferred graduates. Boulder County had the highest rate of auto-conferred responses with 31% while Larimer County had the lowest rate with only 18%.

Campus	Award Type	Graduates	Responses	
		#	#	%
Boulder County	Typical Graduate	316	165	52%
Boulder County	Auto-Conferred	59	18	31%
Larimer County	Typical Graduate	718	506	70%
Larimer County	Auto-Conferred	283	52	18%
Westminster	Typical Graduate	827	367	44%
Westminster	Auto-Conferred	342	80	23%
<b>Totals</b>		<b>2,545</b>	<b>1,188</b>	<b>47%</b>

## Programs Affected

There are 20 programs that had auto-conferred awards. The table on the following page shows the top 10 programs based on the percentage of auto-conferred graduates. Five programs had over 50% of their awards auto-conferred.

The response rates of these programs reflect the additional challenges of stale data. The collective response rate of these ten programs was 36% with only one program (Pharmacy Technician) achieving the expected 50% response rate. Also of note is that the Pharmacy Technician program had less than 20% of its awards auto-conferred.

One caveat is that the response rates shown in the following table are looking at **distinct graduates** instead of **total awards**. This detail means that the response rates will not match our exact response rates by program due to this difference.

CIP	Program	Regular Graduates	Auto-Conferred		Response Rate	
		#	#	%	#	%
110101	COMPUTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES	63	155	71%	66	30%
480508	WELDING TECHNOLOGY	86	108	56%	60	31%
520201	BUSINESS	111	127	53%	89	37%
110901	COMPUTER NETWORKING TECHNOLOGIES	69	72	51%	53	38%
131210	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	51	52	50%	38	37%
030601	FORESTRY WILDLIFE & NATURAL RESOURCES	57	39	41%	37	39%
150101	ARCHITECTURAL AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY	11	6	35%	4	24%
470604	AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGIES	105	53	34%	59	37%
450702	GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS	42	14	25%	27	48%
510805	PHARMACY TECHNICIAN	21	5	19%	22	85%
<b>Total</b>		<b>616</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>36%</b>

## Summary

The process of auto-conferring degrees helps Front Range Community College attain our strategic plan initiative of granting more awards. However, this change as it was originally implemented added a significant new challenge to an already challenging process. The VE-135 data collected each year is critical to FRCC's program approval and renewal process. A low response rate and lack of data from this survey can negatively affect FRCC programs during the program renewal process. The current VE-135 process defined by CCCS does not provide a relief of the 50% response rate to accommodate for our reduced ability to contact auto-conferred graduates. When the auto-confer program is reinstated, we hope that these issues are taken into consideration in its re-design.