



HLC Accreditation 2016-2017

Evidence Document

Academic Affairs

Office of Online Learning

Online Retention Specialist Report: Case Studies and Data Analysis

Additional information:

Online Retention Specialist Report – Case Studies

The online retention specialist's role at Wichita State is to support fully-online students in their pursuit of a fully-online degree. Throughout the semester, students are provided support, resources, and solutions to any questions or concerns they have as they move through their curriculum.

Through the use of Blackboard Analytics, the online retention specialist tracks each student's online activity every week. These students are pursuing online degrees in Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Criminal Justice, Aging studies, Sociology, Women's studies, and General Business. The online retention specialist monitors four Blackboard Analytic variables; course accesses, minutes spent logged in, number of interactions after logged in, and number of submissions. If a student is displaying low online activity (they are significantly lower than the class mean) they are contacted and offered support. The type of support offered depends on the student's needs. It can be general questions regarding drops dates, financial aid/GI bill, and/or contact information for faculty or staff on campus. Students are encouraged to stay in contact with the retention specialist in case they have questions or concerns throughout the semester.

Aging Studies Graduate Student

An online student pursuing a bachelor of general studies in liberal arts and sciences graduated this spring 2016. In the fall 2015 semester the student was offered support due to low online activity in an online course. The student did not request additional assistance but wanted to discuss the possibility of graduate school after graduation. Concerned about age, the student expressed regret about graduating so late in life. During the fall 2015 semester, college algebra proved to be a challenge that caused anxiety about continuing on to a master's program for this student. The online retention specialist encouraged this student to apply to a master's program regardless of challenging courses. The student was reassured it's never too late to pursue goals for the future. Besides college algebra, all the other classes went well and the student finished the last semester in spring 2016. The student was torn between two masters programs - Aging Studies or Learning and Instructional Design. The retention specialist suggested reaching out to both departments and provided contact information for both. Once the student researched both programs, the Aging program fit best. Not only did the student graduate with a bachelors spring 2016, the application submitted to the Aging master's program was accepted.

Student Comments: "My experience over the summer and fall semesters with the WSU online program has been 99% wonderfully challenging and enjoyable. I appreciate all the help, advice, answers you provided me. I couldn't have done it without you. Thanks for helping me achieve what I thought was an impossible goal to reach. Wichita State was the only school out of about four I contacted that actually listened to me, worked with me on transferring all my crazy hours

from three decades ago, and understood the importance to me of earning that degree. I can't wait for grad school in the fall. I couldn't be prouder to be a Shocker." – *Aging Studies Graduate Student*

RN to BSN Student

The online retention specialist attends nursing department meetings regularly to stay current with the program, students, and instructors. The instructors have started including the retention specialist in correspondence with their at-risk students. The nursing department and online retention specialist update one another frequently to provide seamless communication to the nursing students. The RN to BSN classes move quicker than traditional 16 week classes, they only have 8 weeks. An instructor who was not able to get in contact with an at-risk student reached out to the online retention specialist requesting support. The instructor's student didn't meet the first week assignment which meant practicum wasn't going to be a possibility this summer. The instructor was willing to give the student a one day extension, but was very clear course requirements weren't being met. The online retention specialist had already been in correspondence with the same student during the spring semester so it was simple to reach out and let the student know about the assignment issue. The student was informed there was a possibility of failing the class due to inactivity. After being alerted, the student quickly submitted coursework and responded to the instructor. Thankfully, the nursing student was able to take summer practicum.

Criminal Justice Student

An online Criminal Justice student called with questions regarding SPAN 111. This student was responding to an email from the online retention specialist in regards to low online activity in the course. The student was beginning to panic about the end of semester approaching and realized the final grade was going to be lower than expected. The retention specialist met with the student to discuss concerns about class. The student felt disconnected from campus and didn't fully understand the instructor's syllabus. After listening to the student's concerns, the retention specialist reached out to the instructor and requested information about participation requirements. The instructor provided solutions and worked with the student to raise the overall grade. The student was able to make up some online sessions which were missed earlier in the semester. As far as Bb Analytics reported, the student slowly raised overall online activity and passed the class.

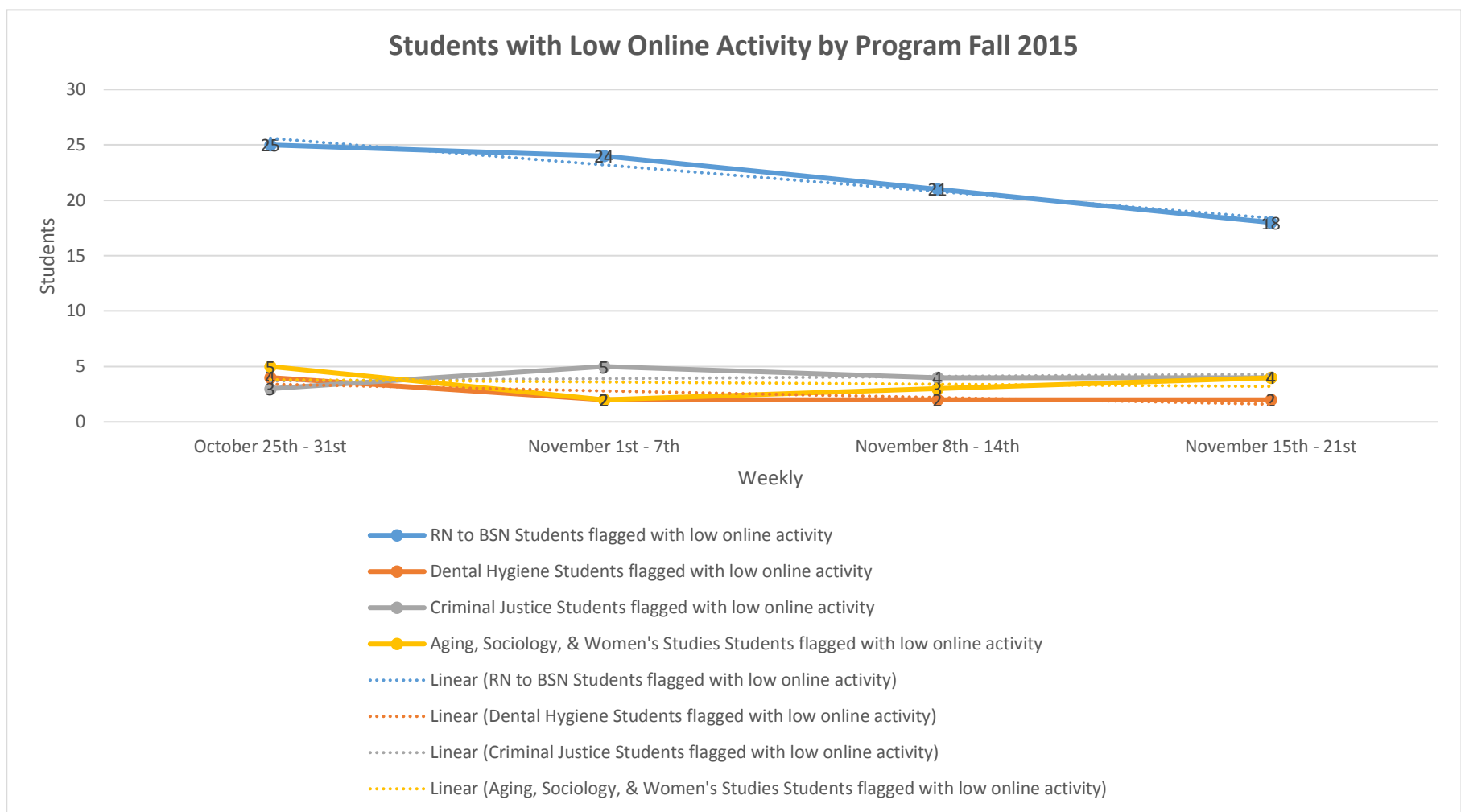
Student Comments: "You are an actual lifesaver! Not even kidding-I was apparently missing half of the assignments because I did not know about Vistas online...now my professor is letting me make it all up! Thank you so much, you have no idea! I'm going to pass this class all thanks to you!!" – *Criminal Justice Student*.

RN to BSN Instructor

Monitoring and tracking fully online students every week provides a beneficial advantage for Wichita State. Over time, trends that begin to surface can be utilized to improve online classes and programs. The online retention specialist can identify challenging courses through low online activity, lower grades in analytics, and students who reach out with concerns. In fall of 2015, the online retention specialist began to notice several students who were either displaying low online activity or low grades in an eight week course. The RN to BSN nursing courses are eight weeks, making it crucial for students to stay on track to be successful. Over the course of eight weeks students were struggling to stay above the required 'C' average as well as maintain average/above average online activity. The online retention specialist contacted the majority of the class offering support and received feedback regarding the instructor. Many students replied with concerns of not passing the class because they were not getting grading feedback in time to make adjustments to improve their grade. They were upset the instructor was not emailing them back with answers or solutions. The online retention specialist worked with the online advisor for nursing as well as the nursing department to alleviate the issues. Since then, the nursing department has re-evaluated how they pair instructors with courses. Finding a better fit between their faculty and courses enhances their students' progress in the nursing program.

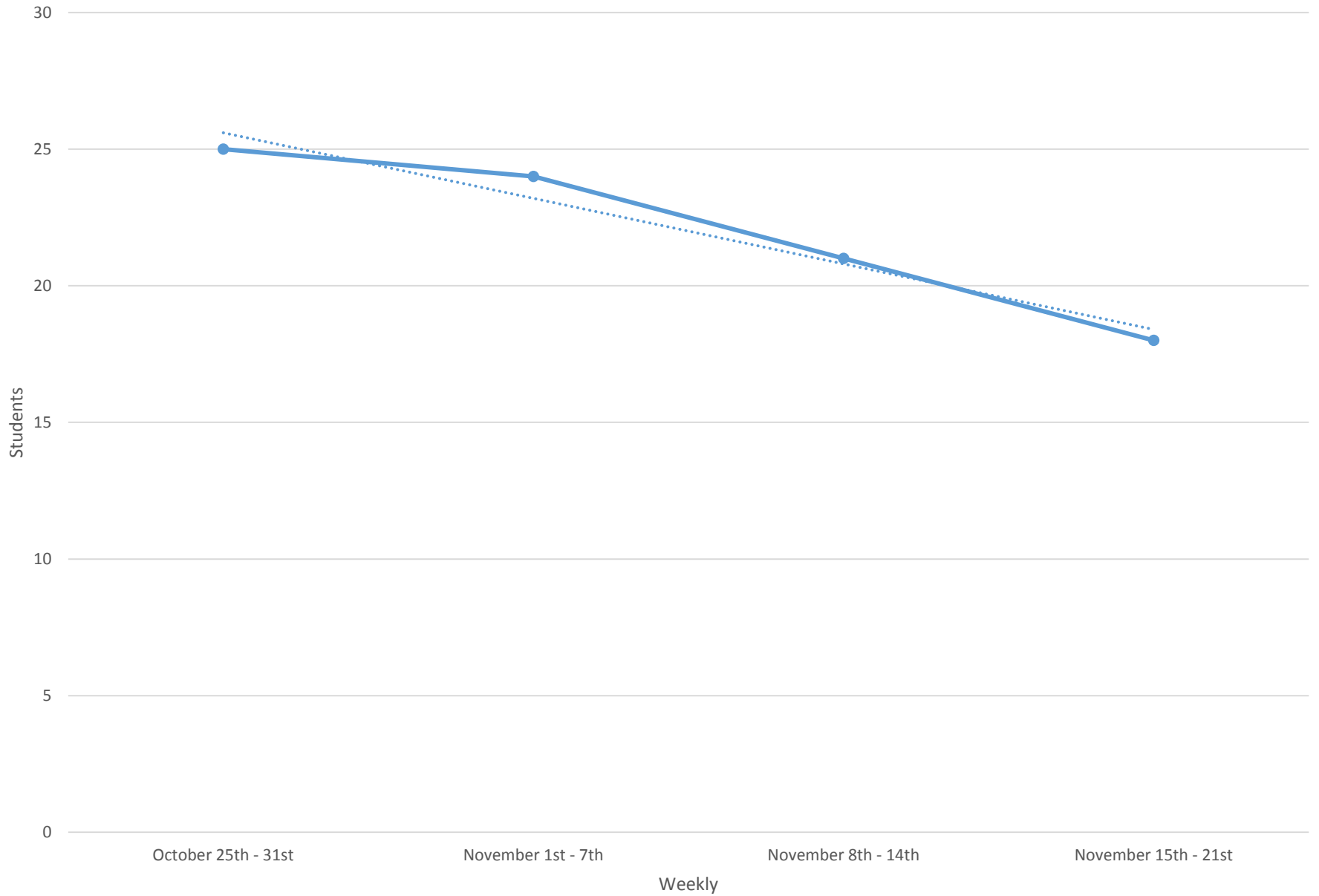
Low Online Activity by Program Fall 2015 (see case studies)

	October 25th - 31st	November 1st - 7th	November 8th - 14th	November 15th - 21st
RN to BSN Students flagged with low online activity	25	24	21	18
Dental Hygiene Students flagged with low online activity	4	2	2	2
Criminal Justice Students flagged with low online activity	3	5	4	4
Aging, Sociology, & Women's Studies Students flagged with low online activity	5	2	3	4

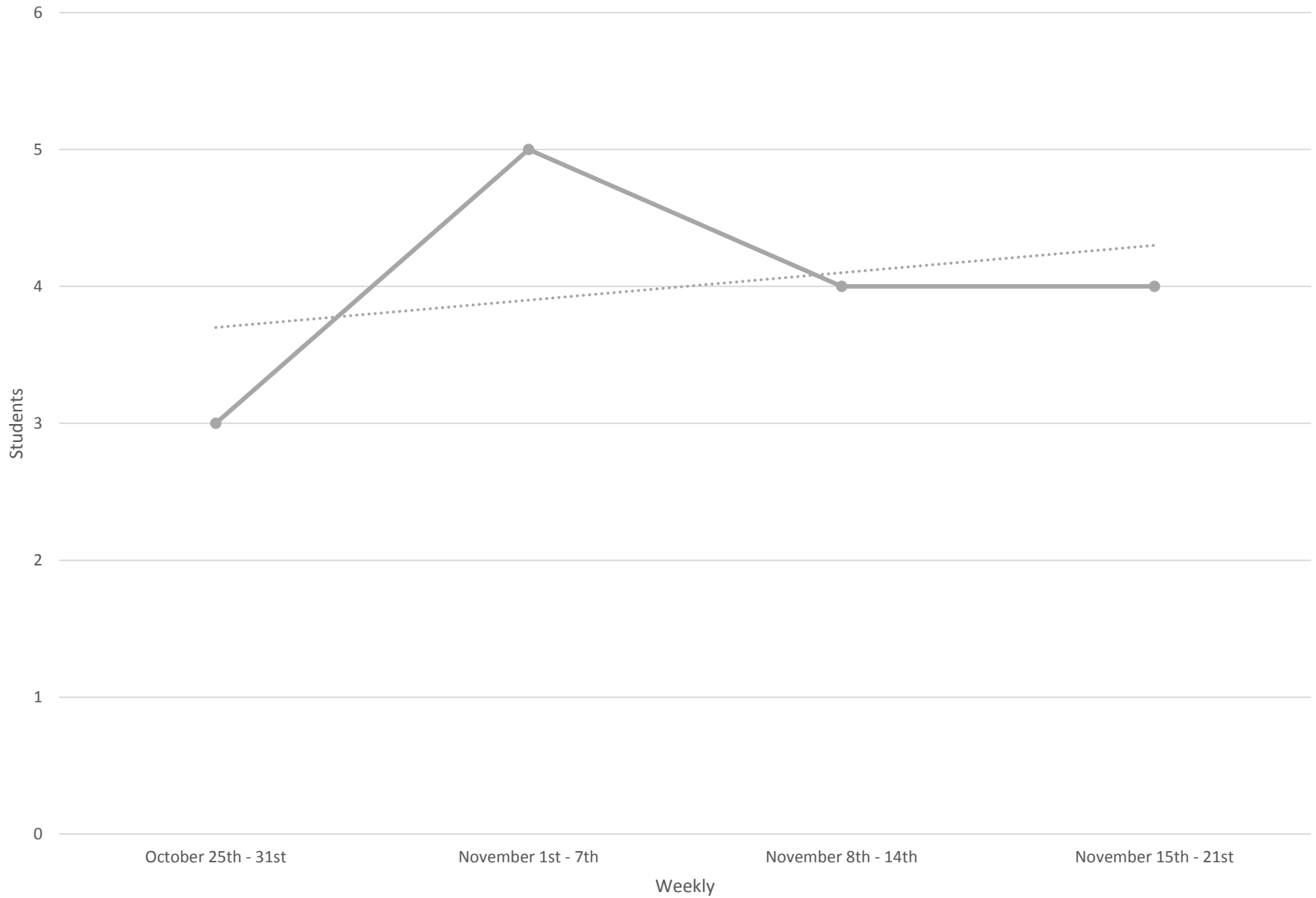


*Students flagged are those who displayed low online activity, course accesses, minutes spent while logged in, interactions between items, or submission

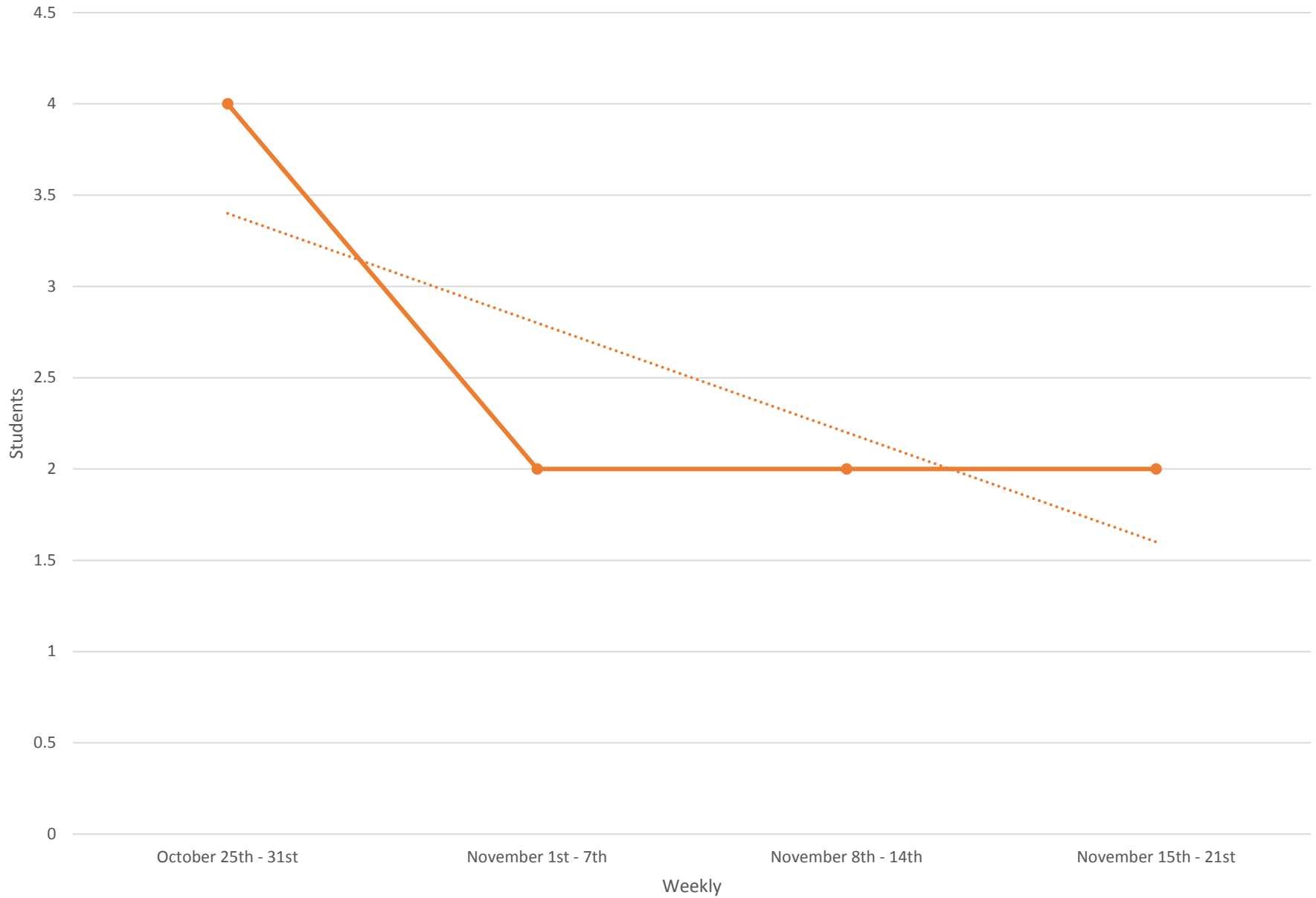
RN to BSN Students flagged with low online activity



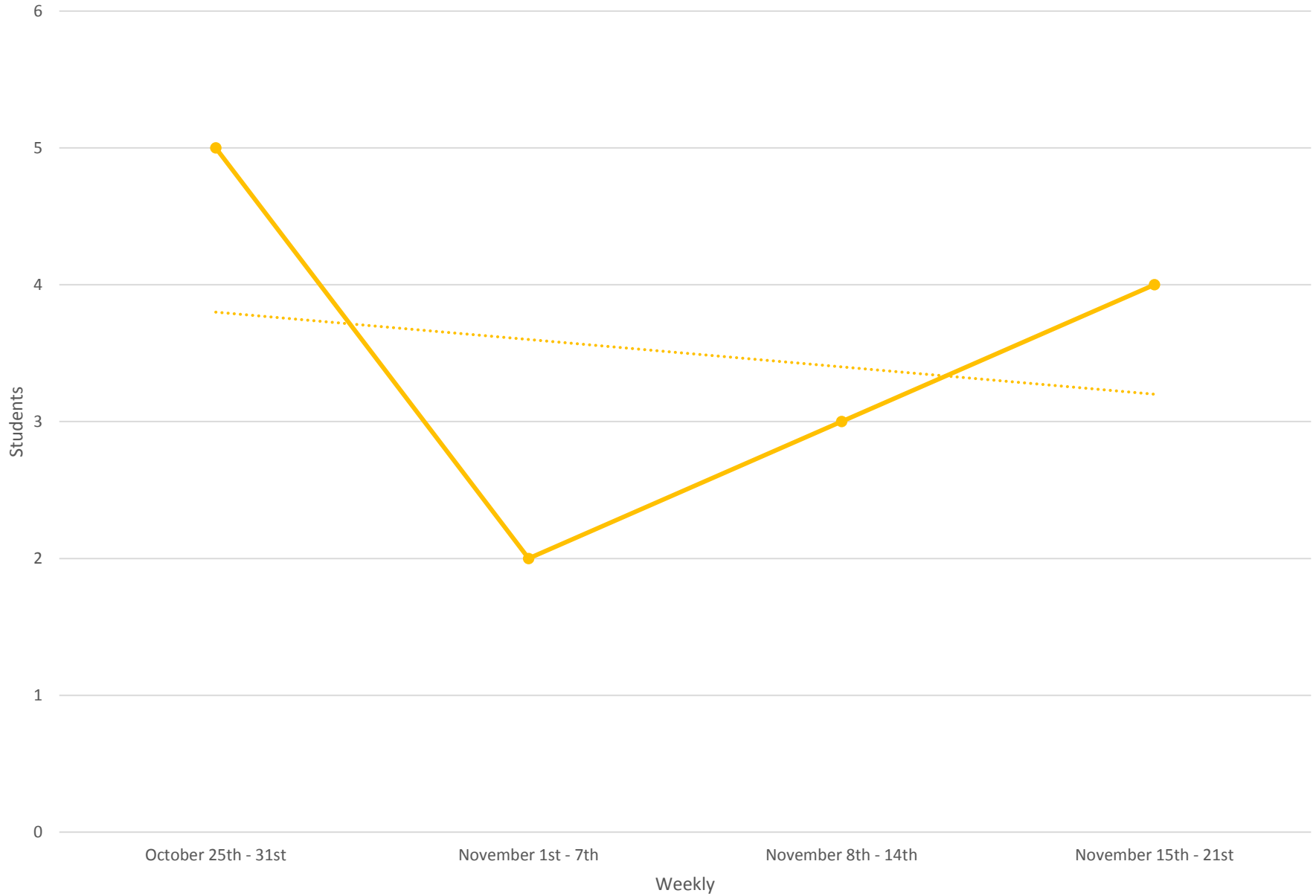
Criminal Justice Students flagged with low online activity



Dental Hygiene Students flagged with low online activity

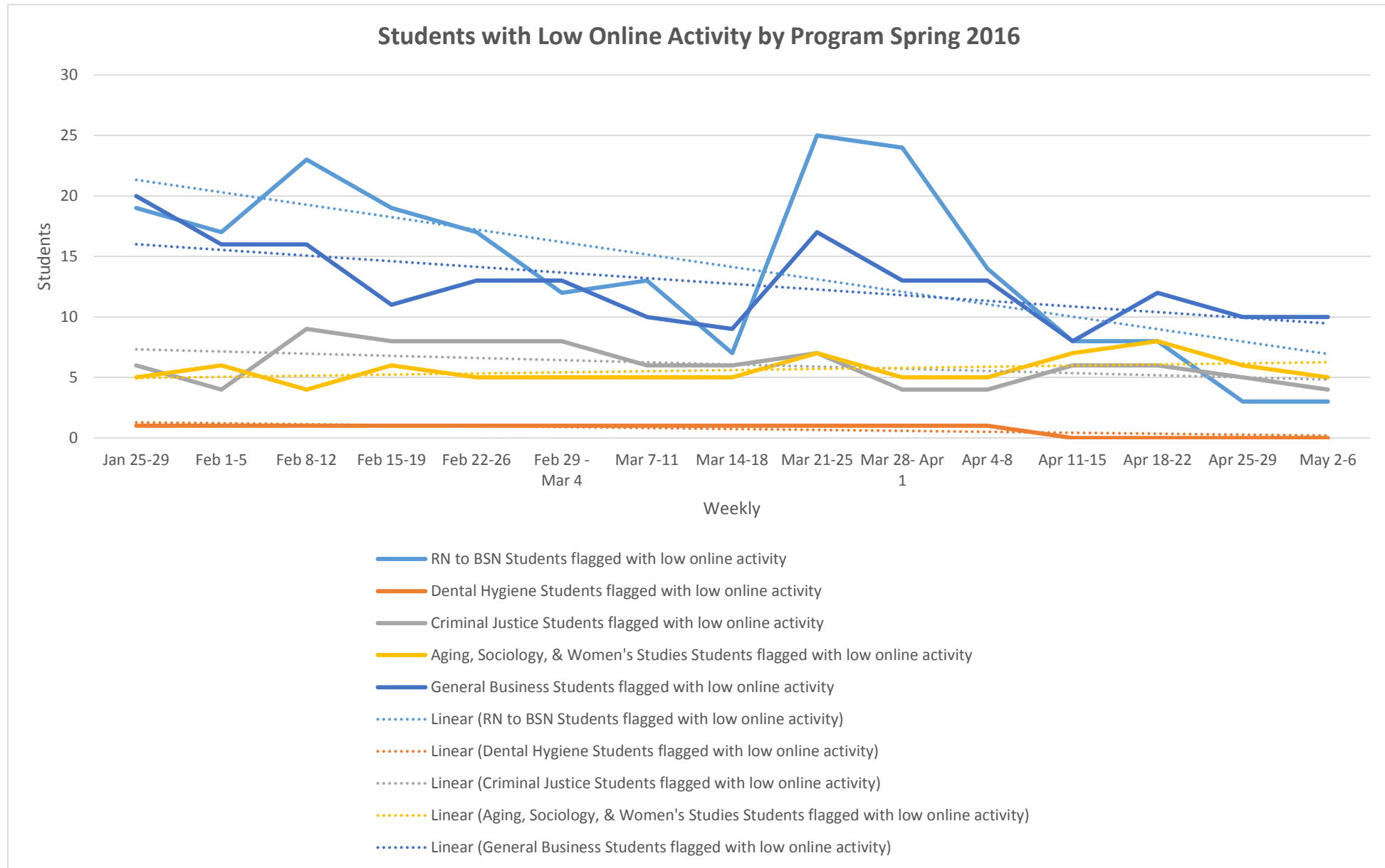


Aging, Sociology, & Women's Studies Students flagged with low online activity



Low Online Activity by Program Spring 2016

	Jan 25-29	Feb 1-5	Feb 8-12	Feb 15-19	Feb 22-26	Feb 29 - Mar 4	Mar 7-11	Mar 14-18	Mar 21-25	Mar 28- Apr 1	Apr 4-8	Apr 11-15	Apr 18-22	Apr 25-29	May 2-6
RN to BSN Students flagged with low online activity	19	17	23	19	17	12	13	7	25	24	14	8	8	3	3
Dental Hygiene Students flagged with low online activity	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Criminal Justice Students flagged with low online activity	6	4	9	8	8	8	6	6	7	4	4	6	6	5	4
Aging, Sociology, & Women's Studies Students flagged with low online activity	5	6	4	6	5	5	5	5	7	5	5	7	8	6	5
General Business Students flagged with low online activity	20	16	16	11	13	13	10	9	17	13	13	8	12	10	10

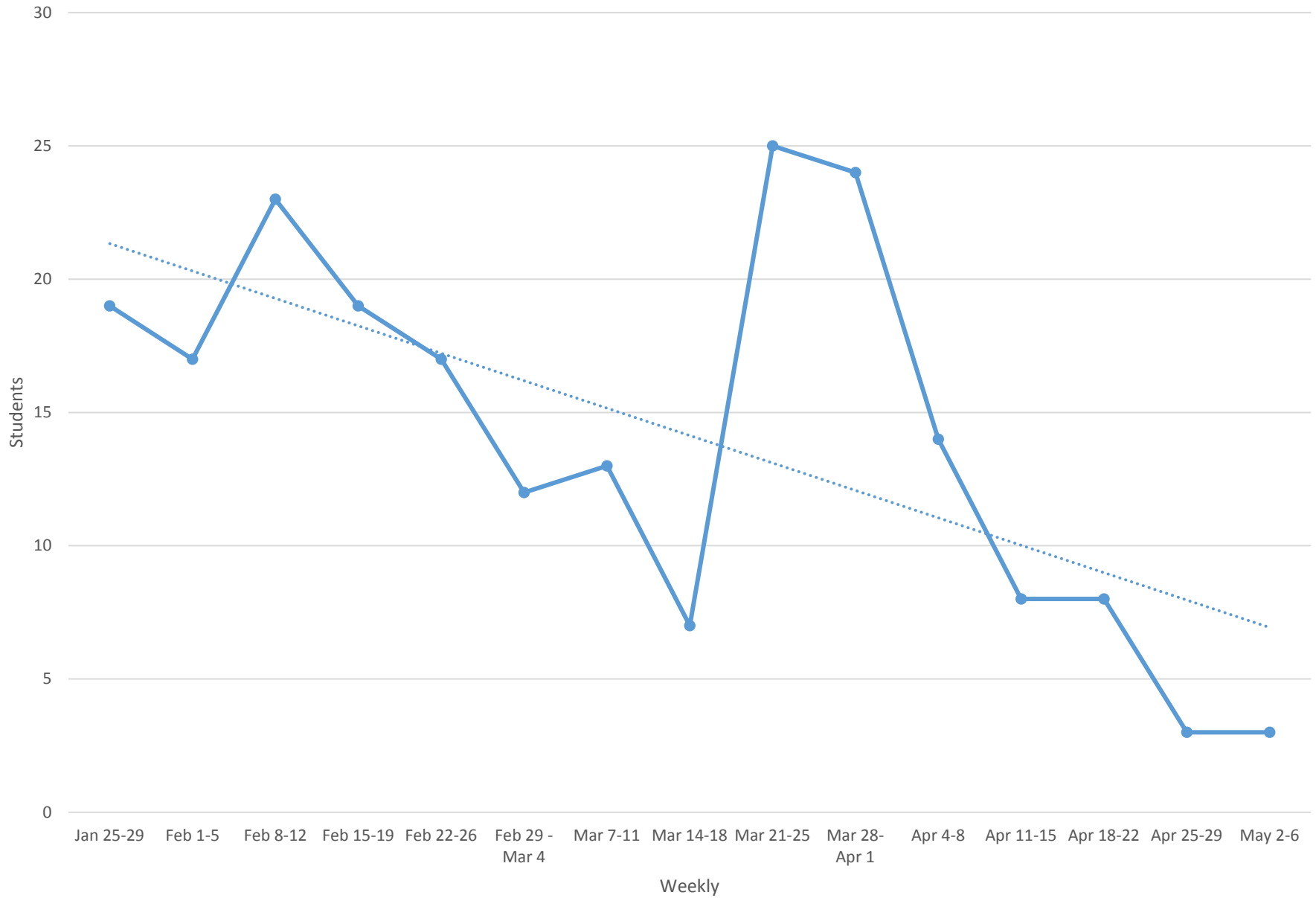


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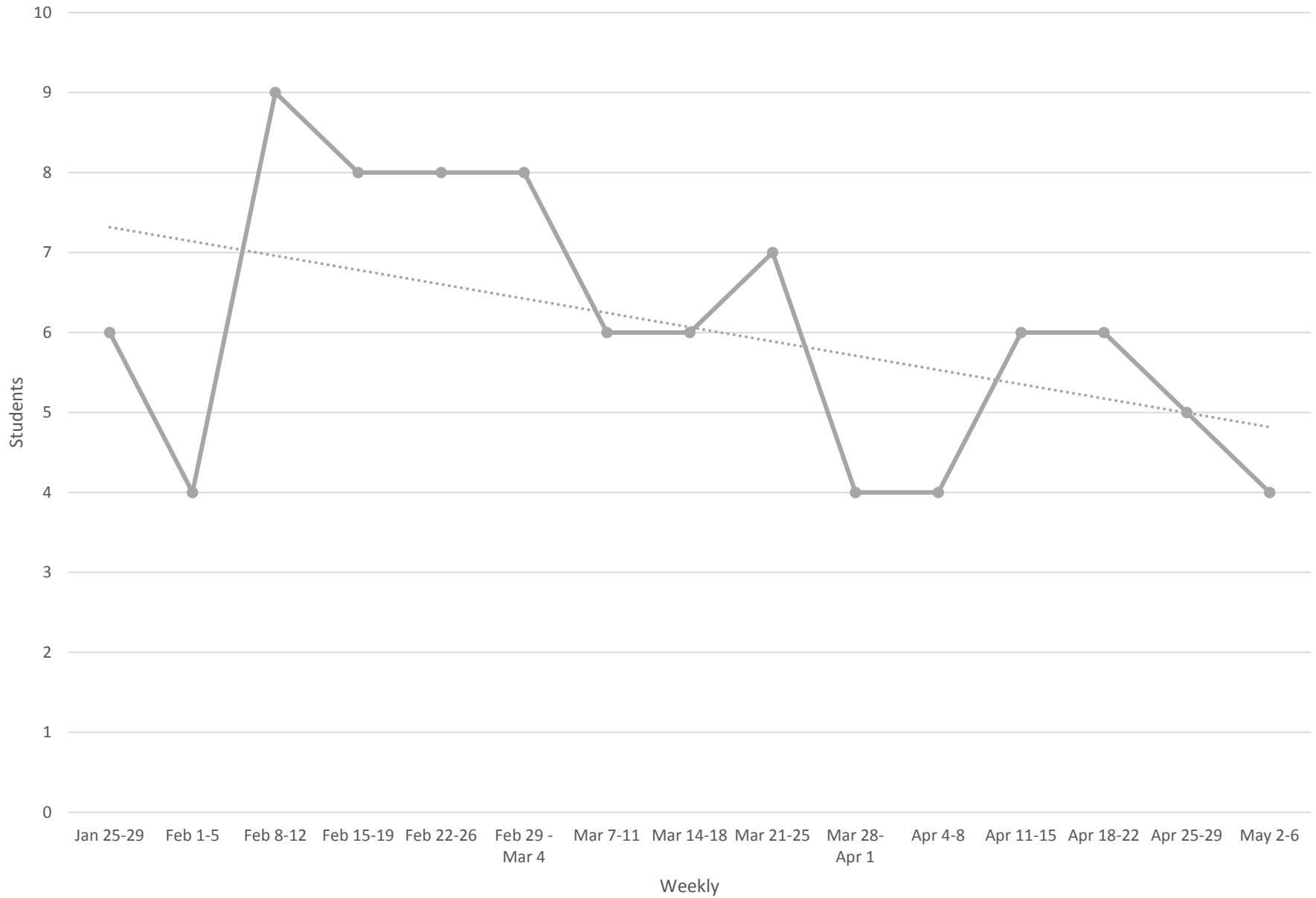
As we moved through the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters, the total number of students displaying low online activity in one or more of their online courses dropped or flattened out towards the end of each semester. The charts representing these drops can appear deceptive, however, as some of the fully online programs such as (i.e. nursing and business) have more students than other programs, such as dental hygiene.

The Dental Hygiene program has the least amount of students enrolled in online courses in comparison to all our other online programs. The dental hygiene chart appears to have a steep drop in the month of April because there was only one student displaying low online activity in the months prior. When that same student improved their online activity, the chart line appears to drop drastically; however, this steep drop indicates that at the end of the semester there were zero dental hygiene students displaying low online activity.

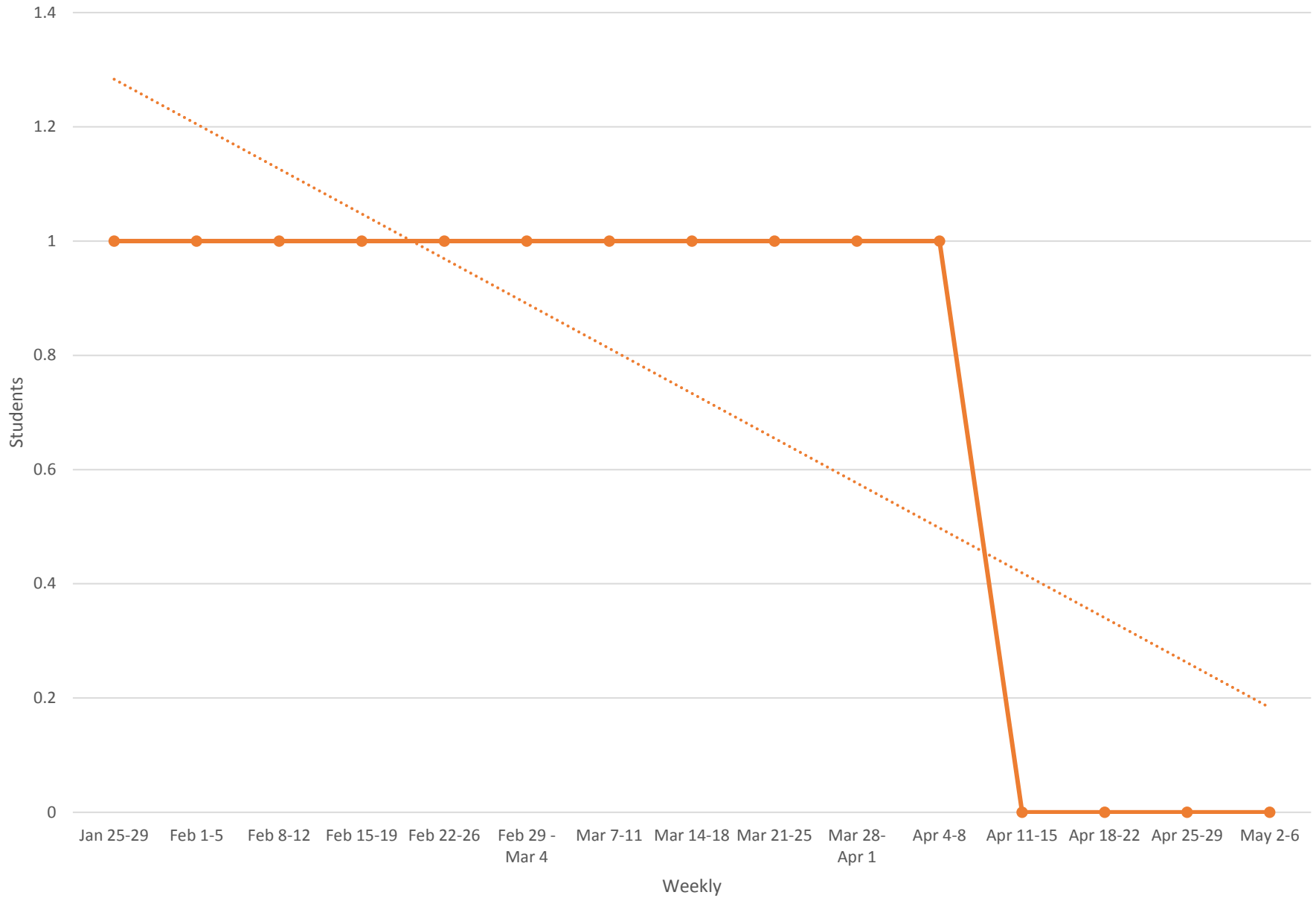
RN to BSN Students flagged with low online activity



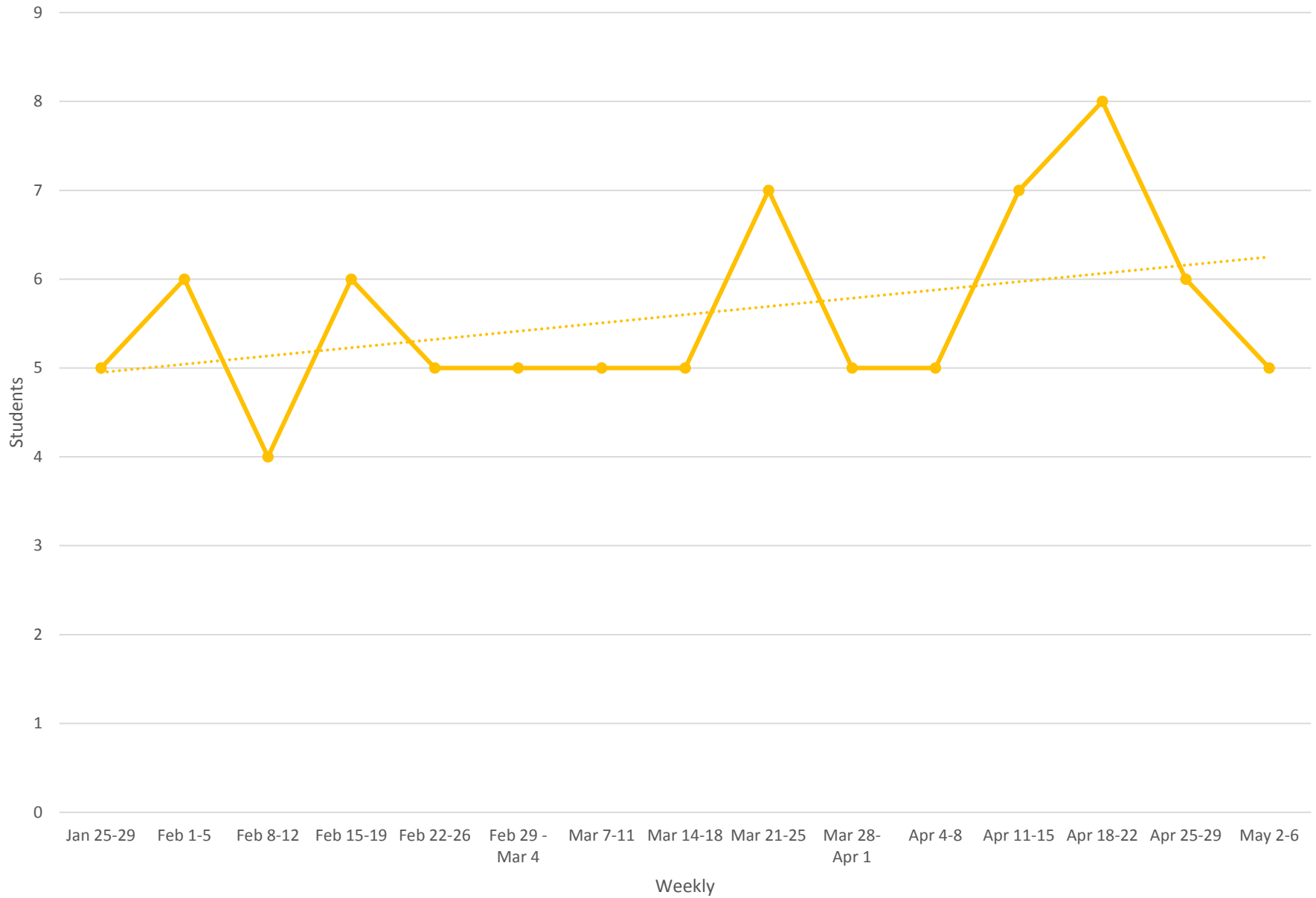
Criminal Justice Students flagged with low online activity



Dental Hygiene Students flagged with low online activity



Aging, Sociology, & Women's Studies Students flagged with low online activity



General Business Students flagged with low online activity

