The robots are coming! Marquette University is asking its professors to help stop the enrollment dip by discouraging students from enrolling at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM).

SHELLY OLSON, INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT SERVICES AT CHIPPEWA VALLEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE (CVTC) in Ellenburg, where the majority of students live in the surrounding Chippewa County, said her campus is seeing more than a 40% of students who take advantage of commuting to classes, but not yet connected, to the local public transit system.

CVTC pays $1.1 million to provide public transit to students, and the routes serving all seven campuses that are less than a half mile. Not surprisingly, these are situated close to public transit stops, which is defined as within a mile of public transit stops. But the linchpin to a degree — and to earning a graduate degree — is simply having a reliable car. According to new research by an education group, the average cost of transportation for students is $1,840 a year for commuting more than two miles to their college, with the biggest barriers to enrollment and completion rate for this group being transportation burdens. Latino students, which are often juggling jobs and families on top of their academic workload, are students of color who are more likely to travel by bus and less likely to own a car, a major transportation barrier to earning a degree.

CVTC, like many of Wisconsin’s 16 technical college campuses, is not connected to the public transit system. "Our students are one flat tire away from earning a degree," Olson said. "We know many of them need to commute to campus due to job opportunities, family commitments, and the vast majority have to work non-existent or so time consuming that it can be hard for them to be able to get to campus on time and be able to succeed in students."

"We want to make sure we have data showing how many students are on our campuses in the snow and cold. This year, there are more than 100,000 students who are not able to get to campus," Olson said. "Students need the option of public transit and less likely to own a car, a major transportation barrier to students. Some schools are starting to focus on out the problem mile by mile. A recent study shows that technical college campuses that are less than a half mile of where they work, earn a degree.\n\n"We’re working with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel to see how we can eliminate the transportation barrier to students, as the #1 barrier to students completing their degree," Olson said. "We’re working with our students to make sure we have data showing how many students are on our campuses in the snow and cold. This year, there are more than 100,000 students who are not able to get to campus."