

## Electronic Theses and Dissertations:

### Limited Shelf Life or Long Tail?

Midge Coates  
Auburn University  
Libraries

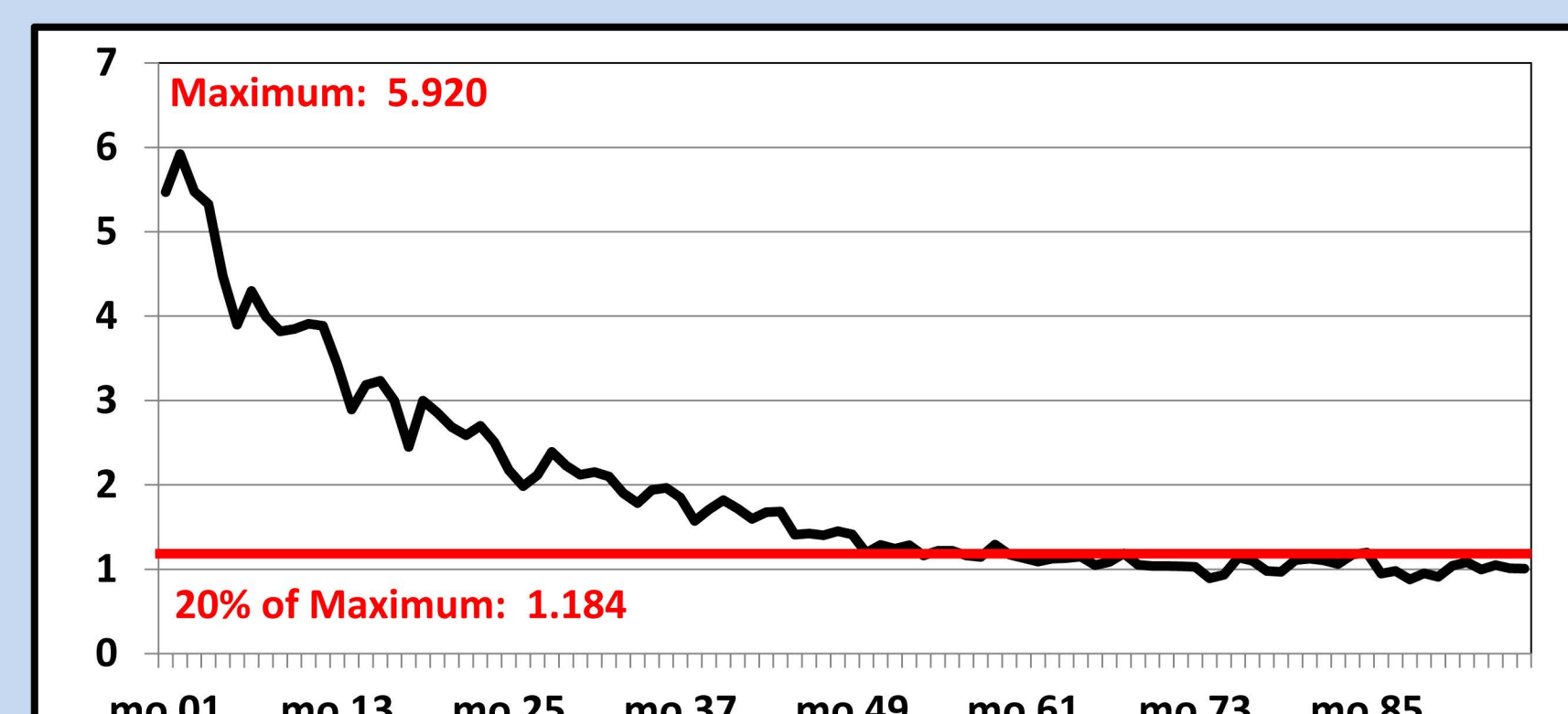
## Researcher Interest Data:

Bibliographic page views per title are presented for all AU ETDs uploaded between 8/16/09 and 8/15/13 (right).

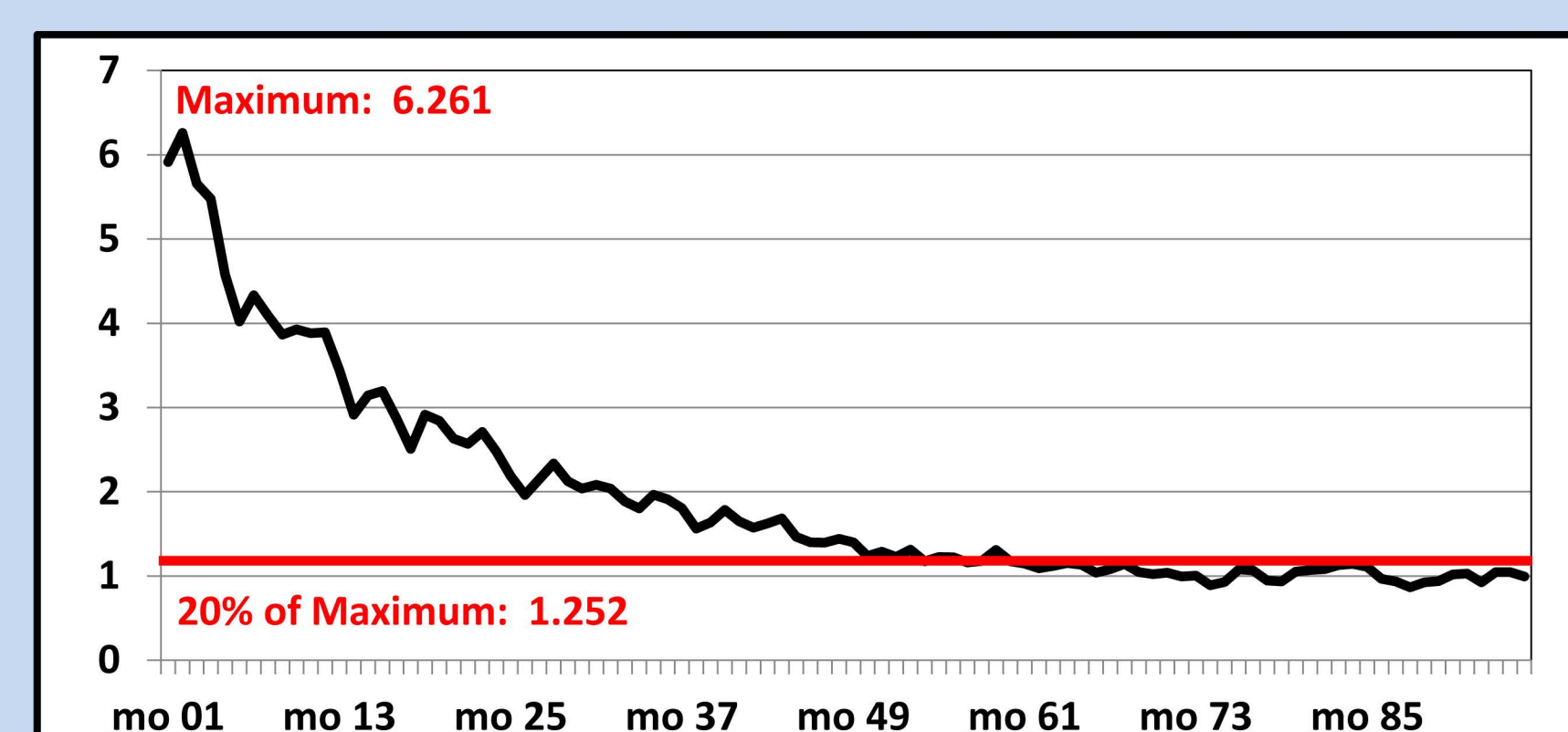
Page views per title for unrestricted and embargoed ETDs are presented below.

## Embargo Status Differences:

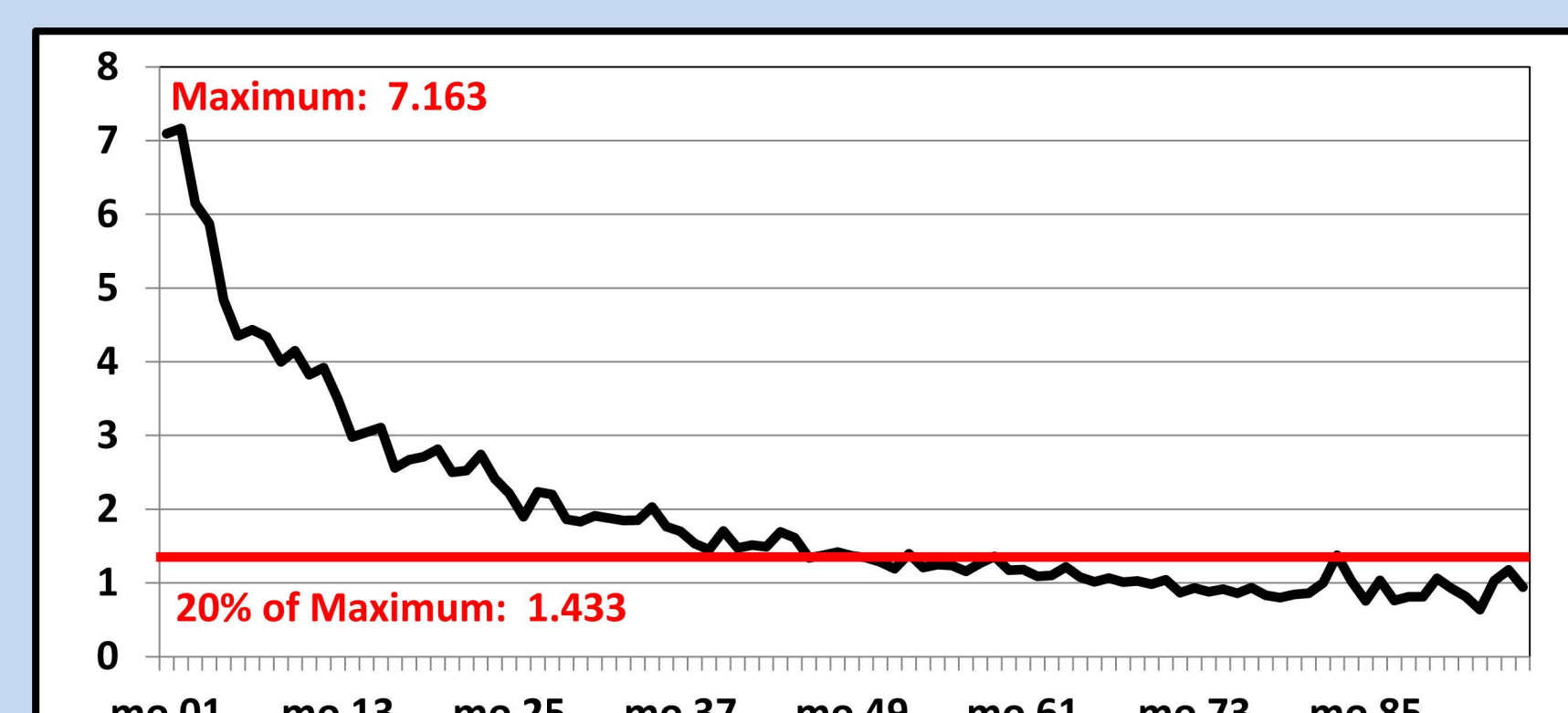
### Unrestricted ETDs



### All AU ETDs, uploaded 8/16/09–8/15/13



### Embargoed ETDs



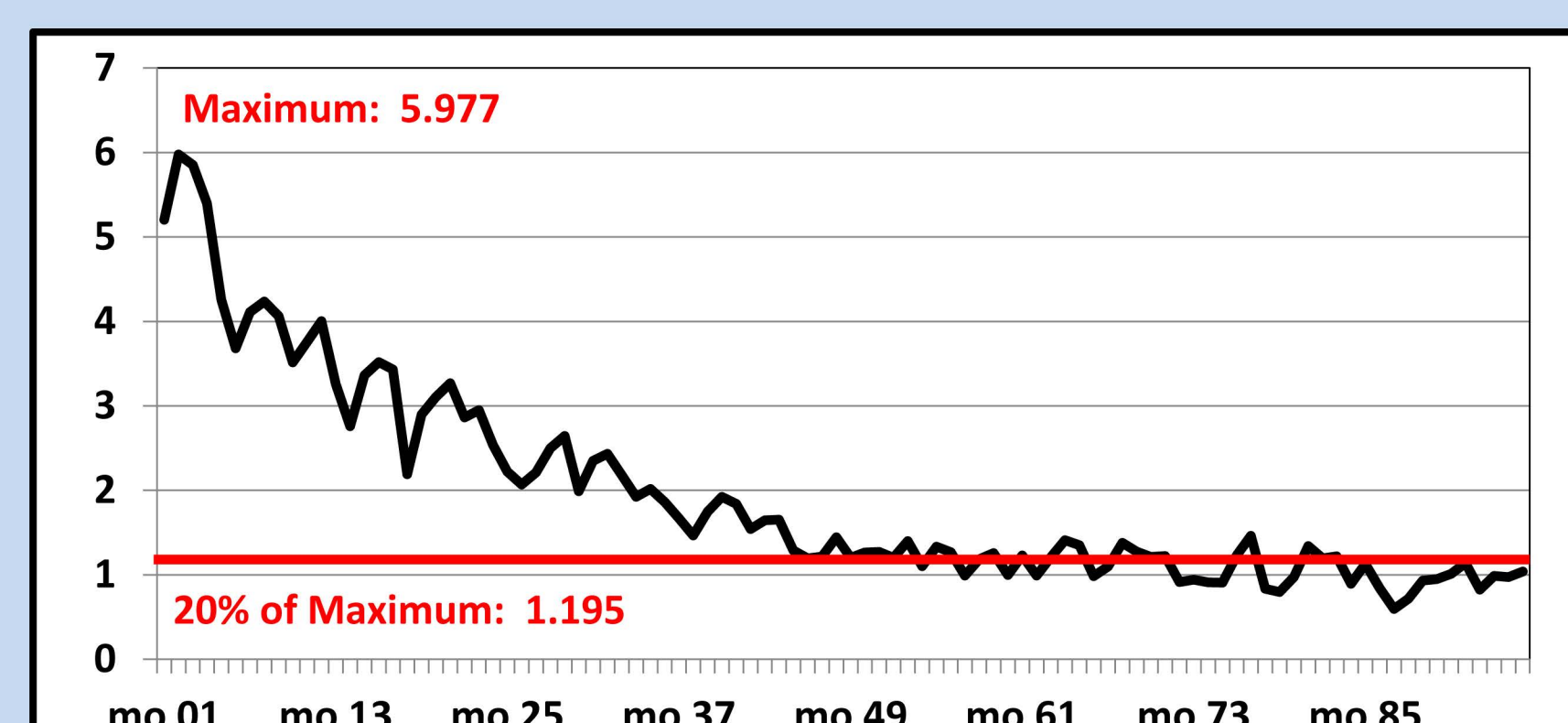
## Differences due to Subject:

Page views per title are presented for ETDs from 5 of the Colleges at Auburn University (right and below).

### College of Engineering

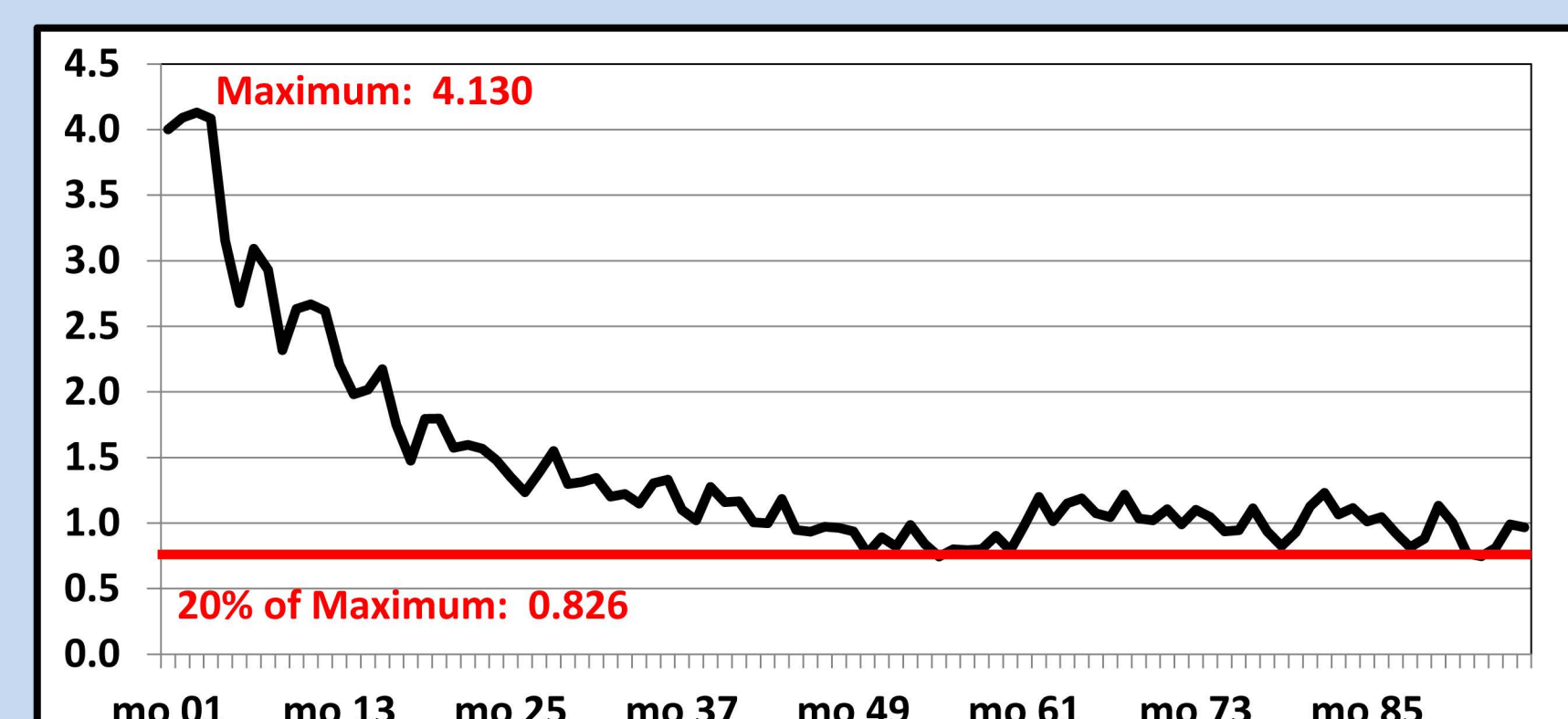


### College of Liberal Arts

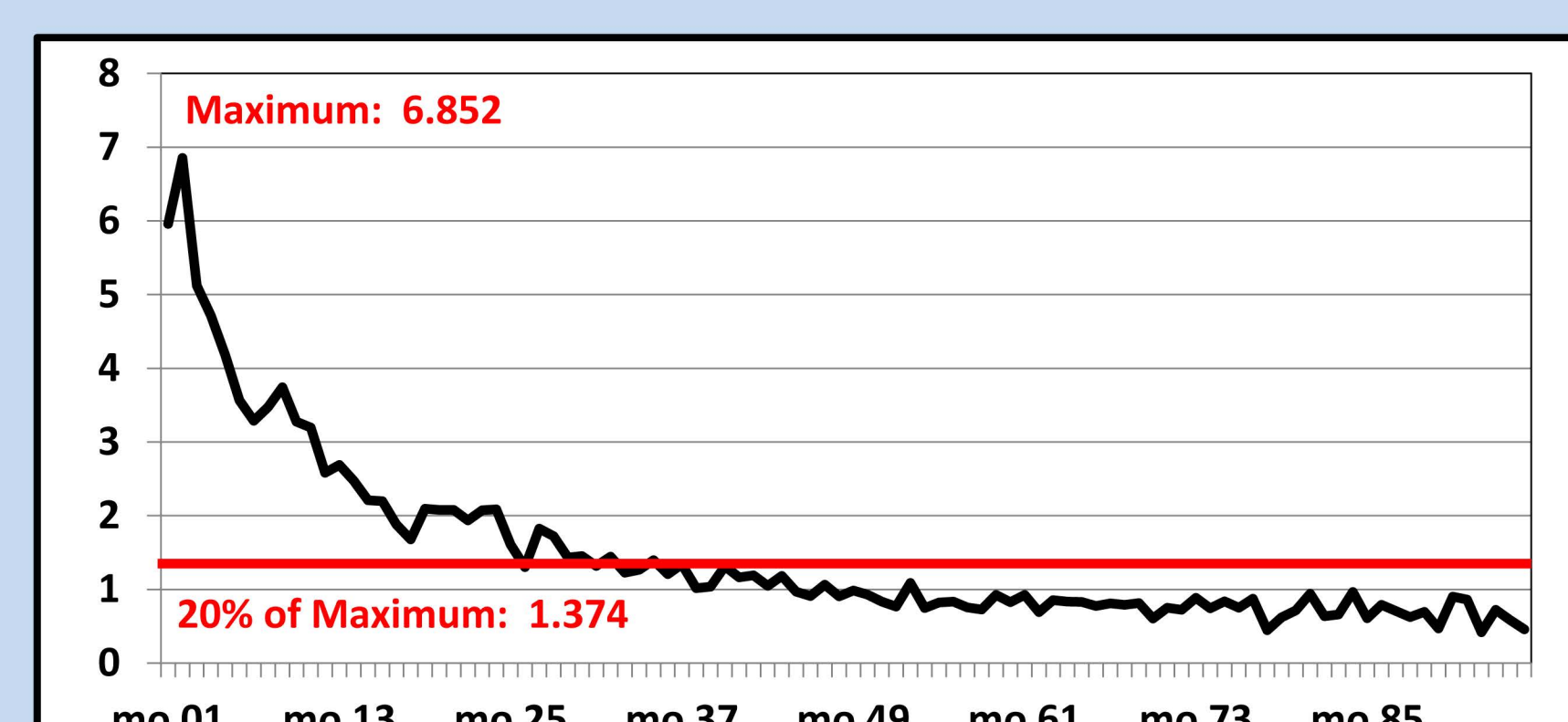


Data from the other 5 Colleges are not reported in this section, due to low numbers of ETDs produced. They are, however, included in the totals given in the first section.

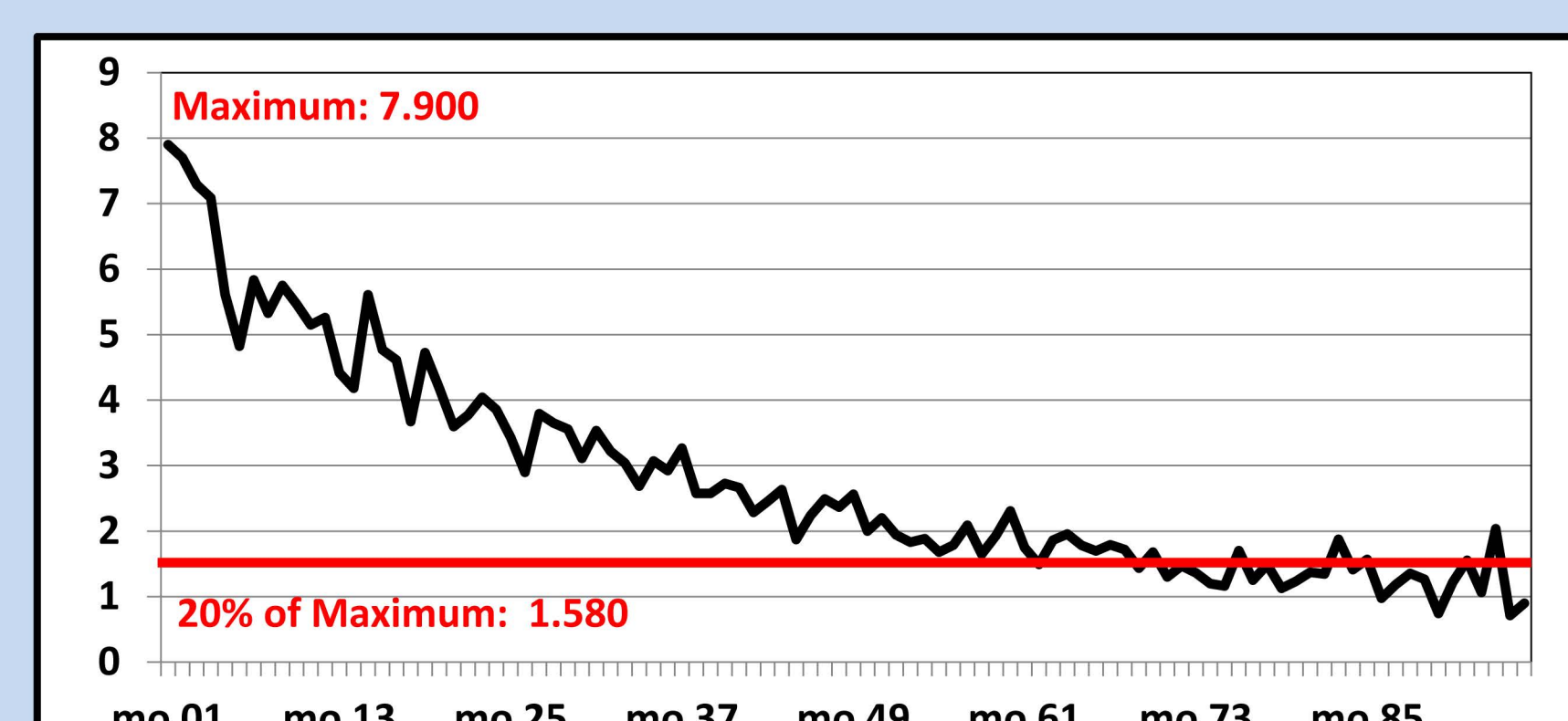
### College of Agriculture



### College of Sciences & Mathematics



### College of Education



## Results and Conclusions:

During the study period:

- Interest in most ETDs (as measured by page views/title) declined by 80% within 4-5 years after upload. In most cases, this decline seemed to stabilize after the 5-year point.
- Interest in embargoed ETDs was higher initially (as compared to unrestricted titles) but declined more rapidly, reaching 20% of maximum within 3-4 years after upload (4-5 years for unrestricted titles).
- The decline in researcher interest varied for different subject areas—fastest for Sciences & Mathematics (20% of maximum within 2-3 years) and slowest for Education (20% of maximum within 6-7 years).

## Do ETDs have a limited shelf life?

Is researcher interest in them sustained over the years? Are some subjects more likely to hold researchers' interest? If so, which ones?

The answers to these questions have implications for repository workflows, embargo length options, and retrospective digitization projects.

- This study tracked bibliographic page views for Auburn University ETDs titles which were uploaded to the repository in the period from mid-August 2009 through mid-August 2013.
- For each ETD title, Google Analytics page views were recorded on a monthly basis, starting with the month of upload (mo 01) and continuing through mid-August 2018 (mo XX).
- Data presented in the graphs: Total number of bib. page views for each month (mo 01, mo 02, etc.) divided by the number of ETD titles available that month.

## Recommendations:

- **Repository workflow:** Where possible, ETDs should be uploaded immediately after approval, rather than in batches at the end of the term. This will make them available to researchers when interest in them is highest.
- **Embargo lengths:** Embargo periods should be shorter, rather than longer, for the same reason.
- **Retrospective digitization:** Local repository content (predominant subject areas for print volumes) and usage data for current ETDs should be included in this evaluation.