



Westmoreland County Community College

ATD Info Brief

January 2013

Achieving the Dream

Broad engagement is one of the themes of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) movement and it is in that spirit that we introduce the ATD Info-Brief. WCCC has participated in ATD for six years and during the last two has had the honor to be recognized as a Leader College. This recognition goes to colleges that have demonstrated successful student outcomes for three years or more that impact a significant portion of the student body. Since joining ATD, WCCC has made important improvements that have had a positive effect on student learning. Among these improvements are:

- Refinement of developmental education
- Improved Strategies for Academic Success class for new students
- Better accountability for outcomes in key gateway courses

All of these improvements will be topics for future ATD InfoBrief publications. This edition is dedicated to the ongoing efforts to improve New Orientation. As you will see in what follows, a lot of hard work has gone into the process of making the orientation the best it can be.

WCCC's ATD InfoBrief is intended to provide a periodic update on various aspects of Achieving the Dream and the Completion Agenda at the college. If you are aware of or have been involved in projects that have contributed to increasing student success, please let us know so we can highlight your good work. We welcome your ideas and feedback. Send them to Andrew Barnette, dean of Public Service/Humanities/Social Sciences, at barnettea@wccc.edu.

Beginning Great - New Student Orientation Program

The WCCC New Student Orientation Program is designed to help new students make a positive adjustment to the college. This required program increases student awareness of campus services, helps students develop a more positive identification with the institution, and increases students' involvement in campus life. The New Student Orientation Program is provided to support students in achieving their educational goals.

Since 2010, the program has undergone extensive review and improvement. Various data snapshots reveal positive, measurable outcomes resulting from the investment of time and energy in the initiative. Reform is a process, not a destination and the information displayed in what follows reflects the process of making improvements to data collection as well as to the content of the program.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN ORIENTATION

The following chart provides a look at the college's efforts at increasing participation. This was accomplished partly by automatically registering new students for orientation at the time they enrolled. Email reminders and postcards were also sent to new students.

	2010	2011	2012	% Change from 2010
Registered	435	835	1199	176%
Attended	551	1000*	1268	130%

*Estimate



INCREASED RETENTION

Data collected during Academic Year (AY) 2011-12 demonstrates that students who participated in the New Student Orientation Program in the fall returned for the following spring semester at a higher rate than those who did not. Unfortunately, only a portion of the names of attendees in the fall orientation were captured; however, this result is encouraging. For the fall 2012 orientation, attendees were asked to swipe their ID cards through portable readers in order to capture more accurate data with respect to attendance. We anticipate a more precise picture of the program as a result for AY 2012-13.

Orientation Documented	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Rate (%)
Yes	229	174	76.0
No	2518	1352	53.7



INCREASED ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The same students whose attendance was documented in AY 2011-12 showed a higher average level of academic success as indicated by GPA than non-attendees in the fall 2011 semester. This gain persisted into the subsequent semester as well.

Orientation Documented	Fall 2011	Spring 2012
Yes	2.60	2.45
No	2.26	2.40

CONCLUSIONS

The positive impact of New Student Orientation demonstrated through this data is a testament to the hard work of many staff and faculty members at WCCC, particularly the New Student Orientation Committee chaired by Carlene Williams, counselor/ACT 101/professor. It also shows the commitment of our students to their own success. With improved data collection techniques, we believe a more comprehensive picture of the efficacy of this program will emerge in coming years.



For more information, visit wccc.edu.