



Westmoreland County Community College

ATD Info Brief

April 2013

Achieving the Dream

This edition of the ATD InfoBrief highlights PDV 160 – Strategies for Academic Success. As one of the promising practices to emerge from WCCC’s participation in the Achieving the Dream initiative, the fall 2013 semester will see expansion of eligibility for the course to first-time, full-time students taking any developmental course. Thanks to Lindsay Adams, counselor/instructor/course coordinator, for preparing the report.

In the spirit of data-driven decision making encouraged by participation in the Achieving the Dream initiative, WCCC held two data summits this spring. The first one, in January at the opening of the spring semester, was intended to share information and collect feedback from the college faculty and staff. The session began with a report on how feedback collected at the previous data summit the year before was used to make various improvements. The second one, in March, was actually a mini-summit in which the ATD Core Team along with gateway course coordinators and other personnel focused specifically on student success data. Discussions led to an initiative to establish a coordinated and comprehensive method for collecting, analyzing and acting on student learning outcomes data in order to allow the college to respond more proactively to trend patterns. This

PDV 160 - Strategies for Academic Success Overview

For approximately five years, WCCC has been offering a one-credit student success course - PDV 160 Strategies for Academic Success - to new students. The goal of the course is to prepare students for success in college. Topics include academic skills such as note-taking and study skills; becoming familiar with WCCC including campus resources, policies and procedures, and understanding the educational planning/registration process. The course is primarily offered as an eight-week course that meets twice a week for the first half of the semester.

Policy Change

Effective with fall 2013, all first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who place into one or more developmental courses are required to take those courses in their first semester and take PDV 160. This target population represents a larger target group than previous years, when the focus was on students taking two or three developmental courses.

INCREASED RETENTION

Data collected over the last three academic years shows solid retention gains for students who successfully complete PDV 160. Over the past two years, retention rates of successful completers of PDV 160 were higher than the college population as a whole.

	All Students		PDV 160 Students	
2009 Fall	n=1492		n= 606	
Spring Retention	1188	79.6%	461	76.1%
Fall Retention	838	56.2%	321	53.0%
2010 Fall	n=1905		n= 577	
Spring Retention	1266	66.5%	424	73.5%
Fall Retention	894	46.9%	329	57.0%
2011 Fall	n=1596		n= 456	
Spring Retention	1037	65.0%	389	85.3%
Fall Retention	776	48.6%	279	61.2%

INCREASED ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Data from the fall of 2011 indicates that students who take PDV 160 along with their developmental course have a higher GPA than those who do not take PDV 160 and the developmental course together. This GPA increase applies to developmental reading and writing. The data does not indicate a GPA different for students in developmental math.

PDV 160 Student Success Rates Fall 2011

PDV 160	Yes	GPA	NO	GPA
ENG 030	6	2.0	21	1.3
ENG 070	257	2.24	138	1.67
RDG 050	134	2.34	58	2.25
RDG 080	276	2.62	203	2.30
MTH 050	275	1.96	164	1.95
MTH 052	145	1.89	265	1.88

Strategies for a Successful Course Expansion

- Consultation with WCCC Student Services Support Assistants revealed problematic pockets with scheduling options. Adjustments to the FA13 schedule and the addition of sections at peak scheduling times were made.
- Education Center schedules for FA13 were reviewed to ensure that developmental course offerings and PDV 160 do not conflict, allowing optimal schedules for developmental students.
- Course objective added that focuses specifically on study skills for math. Materials to cover will be developed in conjunction with developmental math faculty.
- New procedure in place to ensure target population registers for and remains enrolled in PDV 160.
- Full implementation of common assignments required in all sections. Common assignments represent approximately half of the learning outcomes of the course.

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Achieving the Dream continued

measure will help to meet the Strategic Plan goal to “Promote excellence in data usage through the development and use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for student-related information.” The process will leverage the course management system, Blackboard, and will be in place by fall 2013.

In February, a team from WCCC attended the annual DREAM conference. Among the many valuable takeaways from the conference, a consistent theme of maintaining and, in some cases, increasing the rigor of gateway courses was heard. Of course, this effort must be accompanied by appropriate supports for students in the form of tutoring and Supplemental Instruction, to name just two possibilities. This year’s student keynote address was by Ricsy Sanchez, a remarkable young woman originally from Honduras who is now attending Davidson County Community College in Thomasville, North Carolina. To see her inspiring presentation about the obstacles she has overcome along the path to academic success, go to www.achievingthedream.org. If it is not still in the Spotlight section on the main page, type her name in the site’s search box. Her presentation is called “A place where dreams come true.”

