



Westmoreland County Community College

ATD Info Brief

December 2014

WCCC Recertified as Achieving the Dream Leader College

For the second time, WCCC was recently recertified as an Achieving the Dream Leader College. WCCC demonstrated continued improvement in success rates for developmental math students and incremental increases in completion of college-level math courses. In the feedback letter to Dr. Stanley, Carol Lincoln, senior vice president of Achieving the Dream, wrote:

“On behalf of Achieving the Dream, I would like to congratulate your college for being recertified as an Achieving the Dream Leader College. We are excited to recognize your commitment to improving student success and equity, and demonstrating measurable gains on important student success metrics over a three-year period. Leader Colleges embody the goal of Achieving the Dream: lasting change that helps more students achieve their goals.

Through the dedication to the core principles of Achieving the Dream – committed leadership, use of evidence to improve programs and services, broad engagement, systemic institutional improvement, and equity – your college has increased student achievement and made student success central to its mission. Congratulations on your accomplishments.”

In the previous InfoBrief, we announced that WCCC was implementing a revised student placement assessment process. The intent is to try to streamline the pathway to a credential by placing more students into college-level classes in their first semester by recognizing their previous academic successes. The process makes use of a “multiple measures” approach that takes into account students’ high school performance as well as their SAT and ACT scores. Another initiative started simultaneously with the revised placement process was the acceleration of certain sections of developmental reading, English and math courses. This was undertaken with the same intent - to make it possible for more students to complete more college-level work in their first semester. This edition of the InfoBrief addresses both initiatives.

New Placement Assessment Results

We are able, first of all, to report that the revised placement assessment process worked very well. The new standards put in place helped a total of 231 individual students as of September 30. As a result of strong SAT and ACT scores, 51 students were completely exempted from taking the Accuplacer test. Based on strong results on either the SAT or ACT, 111 students were exempted from the reading portion, 92 had the writing portion waived and 109 skipped the math section. In addition, 92 students advanced out of developmental reading, English or math based on completion of the Accuplacer with points added to their scores as a result of their high school GPA. Our assessment of this new process is ongoing. The next phase in determining the overall success of the initiative is to see how students who took advantage of this opportunity perform in their first semester of classes.



Accelerated Developmental Education Courses Results

As for the second initiative, accelerating developmental education courses, sections of reading and math were created that allowed students to complete a developmental requirement in the first half of the fall semester and the subsequent college-level courses (College Writing and Intermediate Algebra) were set up to be completed in the second half of the semester. As of this writing, 47 students have moved on to the second phase of the acceleration program. We will be watching their progress with interest as we make plans to increase access to these kinds of courses during the next academic year.



The End of Late Registration

Taking a cue from many other ATD schools, and supported by significant research on the topic, the college is abolishing late registration as of the spring 2015 semester. The exact language of the policy is as follows: “Students may not add/register/switch sections in any class after the first class meeting—no exceptions.” The policy can be found on the WCCC portal under the link titled “Academic Advising and Changes to Course Registration Policy.” Numerous studies have shown that those students who register late for courses are much less likely to be successful and to persist through their first year of college. An early study by Street, Smith and Olivarez published in 2001 and presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association of Community Colleges found that “80% of early, 64% of regular, and 42% of late registrants were retained to the next semester.” Additionally, among those who do persist, there have been found significant differences in GPA with late registrants earning almost .80 lower than early registrants. These findings demonstrate that the first day of a class is the most important one.



If you have questions about this issue of the ATD InfoBrief or any other Achieving the Dream initiative at WCCC, please contact Andrew Barnette at barnettea@wccc.edu or 724-925-4047.