WCC Policies and Procedures

Title: Freshman Cohorts for First Time Full Time Freshmen Students

References: Hawaii Graduation Initiative
Achieving the Dream
UH System “15 to Finish” campaign
Link to PowerPoint: Frosh Cohort Proposal

Purpose:

This policy is being proposed in order to increase retention and graduation for a critical and at-risk population, which is a first-time, full-time freshman population (Achieving the Dream cohorts). Currently at WCC, 30% of entering students disappear by the second semester. 50% are no longer enrolled after one year. Only 6% attain a degree or BOR authorized certificate after 3 years. This data includes all first-time freshmen, regardless of COMPASS placement or previous academic history. In order to address this large attrition rate as well as lack of degree attainment, we propose that entering first-time, full-time freshman are placed into cohorts which prescribe Math, English, and student success coursework along with a discipline course and optional elective.

Background:

Frosh cohorts began at WCC in 2009 with students being placed in cohorts that consisted of two classes taught as learning communities with recommended Math and English coursework. In 2010, a greater number of cohorts were offered. In 2011, the cohorts incorporated our Student Success course, IS103 Introduction to College. In Fall 2012, we offered 6 cohorts, which served approximately half of our full-time freshman. Over the past five years, we have had between 219 and 269 first-time, full-time freshman in a given fall semester. Thus, we now propose to bring our current frosh cohort efforts to scale.

Freshman (frosh) cohorts, in which students take all or many of their classes together, are considered national best practice to support student success. This is an integral component of City University of New York's successful ASAP program, as presented at WCC Spring 2013 Convocation by Donna Linderman. 50% of CUNY ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) students graduate vs. 20% of similar students vs. 25% of fully skills proficient students. It is further supported by WCC’s own institutional data for ATD, which indicates that cohorts increase persistence (Fall to Spring; Fall to Fall), that cohorts with integrated learning communities also increase success for participants, and that students are less likely to do well when concurrently enrolled in Math and English as first semester freshman, unless they are enrolled in a highly integrated learning community cohort.
In 2011, Frosh Cohort students, compared to all other freshmen were:

- More likely to complete the semester successfully (67-74% vs. 56%)
- More likely to re-enroll Spring semester (80-87% vs. 76%)
- More likely to be enrolled the next Fall (60-70% vs. 54%)
- Had better average GPA’s (2.31-2.78 vs. 2.15)

Authority:

Jointly shared between the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs

Definitions/categories:

First time freshmen students are defined as incoming students who have no previous college credits anywhere.

Full time students are defined as students enrolling in 12 or more credits in a semester.

Thematic courses are ones that ideally have no prerequisites and are appropriate to entering freshmen; fulfill degree requirements; fulfill degree requirements of common transfer degrees; and allow students to begin to explore an area of interest.

Procedures:

Starting in Fall 2013, students entering as first time freshmen at WCC who desire to enroll full-time will be placed in a cohort by the counselors who register them. The cohorts will primarily be for those students pursuing our A.A. HWST and A.A. Liberal Arts degrees.

The cohorts will primarily consist of a thematic class (e.g. PSY 100, HWST 107, SP 151, HAW 101, ICS 101, etc.) coupled with a section of IS 103, where the exact same students will be enrolled in each class. Some sections of thematic courses and IS 103 may be run as a learning community, where the two courses share time and curriculum. Students will then also be assigned to an appropriate level of Math and English based on their COMPASS scores.

Students wishing to complete 15 credits (c.f. UH System “15 to Finish” campaign) in the first semester will be encouraged to choose an additional elective course.

Exclusions:

First time freshman students who want to be enrolled full-time but exempted from the cohorts will be allowed to opt out during registration if they place into transfer level Math and English (≥100). This is due to the fact that about 70% of those who place in transfer (college) level Math and English have succeeded in their first semester historically at WCC. (Note that 30% are not successful. Thus, cohorts are recommended even for these students.)
Exceptions for students who do not want to participate in cohorts but want to enroll full-time and placed in remedial or developmental Math or English will be considered on a case by case basis by the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

Returning students and transfer students will not be impacted by this policy. Most veterans will also not be impacted as they commonly bring in ACE credits. Part-time students (many of which are non-traditional) will not be impacted.

**Revision:** Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs

**Effective date:** April 8, 2013 for Fall 2013 registration.

**Revised date:**