

Removing Policy/Procedural Barriers for Increased Access and Student Success

Presented by:

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For community colleges to achieve the twin goals of open access education for all and increased student success and completion rates, they must continually identify and remove critical policy and procedural barriers to educational attainment – from first point of contact, through enrollment, through retention and finally completion.



Cuyahoga Community College





Barrier: Required Transcripts From Other Colleges

- *Prior State:* transcripts were required for all degree seeking students with all letter grades transferring, including F grades
 - including F grades negatively impacts a student's GPA which then can have a further negative effect on financial aid eligibility and graduation
- *New State:* transcripts are no longer required, with any submitted transcripts being evaluated only for passing coursework; courses with F or W grades will not be transferred in; official transcripts are required if prior coursework is intended to meet JCCC graduation requirements
 - excluding F and W grades can have a positive effect on a student's GPA, as well as ensuring that students who are required to submit transcripts for various reasons (veterans, athletes, certain selective programs) are not penalized by being forced to be evaluated on all transferred coursework

Barrier: No Required Support for Students Continuing Enrollment After Suspension Appeal

- *Prior State:* students on academic suspension were only permitted to continue enrolling if approved for a Suspension Appeal which required a well-documented, severely extenuating circumstance for approval
 - the rate of successful returns to JCCC from an Suspension Appeal were very low, and those who did return from suspension had no mandatory support system
- *Current State:* students on academic suspension may continue enrollment if they participate in the Success Opportunity Semester program which provides support for students, introduces suspended students to resources on campus, and requires frequent contact with an advisor with the student enrolling in no more than 12 credit hours
 - while a student on academic suspension may use this program only once, the comprehensive array of high touch point support services are designed to help these students become academically successful moving forward

Barrier: Academic Standing Requirements

- *Prior State:* after earning 12 credit hours, a student's "institutional" GPA consisted only of coursework taken at JCCC, while a student's "overall" GPA included coursework taken at JCCC and credits transferred from other colleges; a student was placed on academic probation when their GPA fell below either: 1) 1.7 GPA with 12-30 credit hours; or 2) 2.0 GPA with more than 30 credit hours
- *New State:* after earning 12 credit hours, a student's "institutional" GPA consists only of coursework taken at JCCC and is the only GPA considered when evaluating a GPA for placement on academic probation; a student will be placed on academic probation when this GPA falls below a 2.0 GPA beginning with the summer 2019 term
 - removes prior poor grades from a student's GPA for purposes of determining academic probation status

Barrier: Holds Blocking Student Enrollment

- *Prior State:* JCCC had a number of holds that would be placed on student accounts for various reasons, such as a requirement to take developmental coursework prior to college-level courses, or if a student had mail returned to the college and a change of address form had not been processed
 - when a registration hold was active, all registration activity had to be completed in-person by the student
- *Current State:* holds for developmental coursework are now removed after a student meets with an advisor and completes a College Readiness Plan, while holds for address changes are removed when the form is submitted rather than when it is processed
 - while holds still exist for some activities, such as paying a past due bill or seeing an advisor, holds that have been removed have helped students complete timely registrations and stay enrolled, so they can continue to progress towards a degree or certificate

Barrier: Graduation Application Requirement

- *Prior State:* many students were unaware that JCCC required an application for graduation in order to have a degree or certificate awarded, or students believed the application was only needed if a student chose to walk at commencement
 - students believed their degree would be automatically awarded once all degree requirements were fulfilled, and often left the College without actually being awarded their earned certificate or degree
- *New State:* implementation of an automatic graduation policy by the Records Office allows for the awarding of a degree or certificate without a formal application for

graduation; students who have met all other degree requirements are notified they will be awarded a degree or certificate unless they affirmatively opt out of the automatic award

- since beginning this process in 2014, a total of 930 degrees and certificates have been awarded through this automatic process

Barrier: Graduation Requirements

- *Prior State:* students must earn both a 2.0 GPA at JCCC in addition to earning a cumulative 2.0 GPA on all completed coursework in order to graduate
 - students with prior poor academic performances are at a disadvantage when returning to JCCC to complete a degree as their prior grades are included in their GPA
- *New State:* beginning with the summer 2019 term, students must earn at 2.0 GPA on courses taken at JCCC in order to graduate
 - removes any prior poor grades from the GPA needed to complete at JCCC

Barrier: Confusing Pathways to Completion

- *Prior State:* printed course catalogs listed classes under various academic disciplines; this provided students with complicated and outdated graduation and completion requirements for any given degree or certificate program
 - students were unable to navigate proposed degree or certificate requirements independently
- *Current State:* a new online course catalog incorporates academic pathways which allow students to browse by area of interest to easily find the sequence of courses needed to complete a certificate or degree in real time
 - students can explore course offerings by academic or career interests and easily access and assess the coursework needed to reach their academic or workforce goals

Barrier: Connecting Community Members with the College

- *Prior State:* as a large, complex institution with four physical campus locations, potential students often became discouraged or intimidated when attempting to find information about course and program offerings
 - the College was not making connections with members of the community who could most benefit from Tri-C's workforce and affordable access to higher education but might not be able to physically access services offered at the College
- *Current State:* the College created Access Centers, which are located in community partner organizations so that Tri-C can meet potential students where they are and provide free in-person assistance with registration, admissions, financial aid and other issues
 - College representatives hold events in local organizations to provide anyone interested in programming the information and assistance needed without having to travel to unfamiliar campuses and navigate online processes

Barrier: Success in Developmental Math

- *Prior State:* after taking the Accuplacer assessment, a very large percentage of students placed into developmental math, with many struggling to complete or never reaching college level math
 - students discouraged with failure to complete developmental math stopped out and never successfully completed a credential
- *Current State:* through a collaborative faculty and administration research process, Tri-C selected ALEKS as its new assessment and math tutoring software
 - students are more accurately placed in higher levels of math and now have the opportunity to work through ALEKS to improve math skills and re-test into higher math levels, with 55% of students who take the assessment, spend time in the software and retake the assessment placing at least one course level higher in math

Barrier: Complicated Process for Students to Receive Credit for Prior Learning

- *Prior State:* the College had no central location for information for students investigating how to receive credit for college-level education acquired through work or life experience; students had to wait to apply for prior learning credit to until they had earned 12 credit hours at the College; additionally, students paid 50% of the instructional fee for each course approved for credit for prior learning
 - few students were able to access the process of earning credit for prior learning even though many students would have earned college credit through the program
- *Current State:* in conjunction with faculty, an advisory committee updated the process to eliminate the minimum credit hour requirement and reduced the fee for prior learning credit to \$50 per approved course; additionally, each dean of academic affairs office on each campus is now the central point for students to inquire about the process
 - with the reduction in cost and the removal of other barriers, it is expected more and more students will take advantage of credit for prior learning which will lessen time to a degree or certificate and increase the number of course credits earned while providing real cost savings to students

Barrier: Enrollment for Summer Visiting/Transient Students

- *Prior State:* the College required proof that students from other institutions wishing to take classes at the College over any summer term had met any prerequisites at their home campus needed to take that class and, if such proof was not provided, needed a

manual override to register; evaluations of prerequisites and provisions of overrides were not consistent at each campus

- students who otherwise would enroll in summer classes at the College were taking the same classes at other institutions or at online institutions rather than Tri-C
- *Current State:* students from other institutions wishing to take classes at the College over any summer term must only submit a consent form from an academic or faculty advisor at their home institution confirming the summer class is appropriate for that particular student; additionally the College created a fully online enrollment process for visiting students
 - current process is in alignment with other local community colleges and has reduced the length and complexity of the summer enrollment process so more students can complete classes at the College that can transfer to their home institutions

Barrier: Students Unprepared for an Online Learning Environment

- *Prior State:* faculty had expressed concern that as more and more of the College's courses were offered either fully online or as a hybrid class, students lacked the technological skills to navigate in an online academic environment successfully in addition to struggling with more traditional study concepts such as time management and effective communication
 - success rates in online classes were lower than those rates for in-person classes
- *Current State:* the My Online Readiness Experience (MORE) is an onboarding and technology readiness course for all new students regardless of the modality of courses taken; its self-paced, interactive and engaging curriculum focuses on three areas critical for academic success: technology, study skills and communication skills; as for technology, students learn about and are assessed on technology skills such as use of Microsoft Word and email, and are introduced to Blackboard Learn, the College's Learning Management Software
 - since MORE was implemented in August of 2018, students who took the course and who responded to a MORE survey have overwhelmingly indicated MORE has been helpful in preparing them to succeed in an online environment, with 88% of those responding indicating MORE prepared them for the College online learning environment and 82% indicating they felt more comfortable submitting assignments through Blackboard and participating in discussion boards