A SIMPLE PROPOSAL BY JAMES METZ

September, 2009

PROPOSAL

Students will not be allowed to register late for any classes offered in the Kahikoluamea Department.

RATIONALE

A student who misses the first two classes has missed 2.5 hours of critical instruction, plus the expected five hours outside of class study, a deficit of 7.5 hours. If a student encounters difficulty understanding the lesson on the third class meeting, he or she will be even further behind and have less than 48 hours in which to learn the material covered over the first 3 days (10% of the number of class meetings) in order to be prepared for the next class. Sometimes the students have late-registered for more than one course. From my personal experience, students who register late rarely succeed. Any advantages gained by the few students who register late and succeed are outweighed by the disadvantages of those who register late and fail.

Furthermore, some justification for late registration is that other departments on campus, not Kahikoluamea, have courses that are under-enrolled. Allowing students to register late enables the College to offer courses that may otherwise be cancelled. However, the Kahikoluamea Department does not have this problem, so the Department should not be party to a policy that solves a problem that it does not have.

One successful model of a no late registration policy is at Sinclair Community College. After implementation of the policy in Spring 2003, Sinclair reported the following increases in enrollment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Spring 2003</th>
<th>Fall 2003</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>+2.6%</td>
<td>+2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>+3.9%</td>
<td>+4.7%</td>
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Please refer to Appendix 1 for full details of their rationale and the consequences of their policy.

I have also included a brief report of a study (Appendix 2) that links student success with time of registration. Results of this study show that students who register late are “much less likely to persist to the [next] semester” and they were more likely to withdraw (retention) than those who register early or
during the regular registration period. Furthermore, success rates as measured by GPA and course completion also correlated to time of registration (Street, Smith & Olivarez). There is no need for us to re-invent the wheel and spend more time investigating. We can act now.

It is time for the Kahikoluamea Department to take the lead and implement a policy of no late registration.

As always, the Dean has the authority to allow a student to register late if the situation is deemed serious enough to require such action, but prudence demands extreme restraint in this respect lest a “no late registration” policy be undermined.
ABOLISHING LATE REGISTRATION

Is your school like ours used to be? In the one or two weeks before school, do you have a frenzy of activity that overwhelms staff, generates long lines, and creates a sense of havoc among students? It has been the modern higher education method-of-choice to permit students to register almost whenever they wanted to do so. Sometimes, this has meant that we as institutions have established a series of registration periods, including a late registration period that might intrude into the quarter as much as one week.

At Sinclair Community College (SCC), we discovered that not only were we allowing conditions that fostered less than favorable conditions for student success, but we were implementing institutional policies to support them. One institutionalized policy was late registration, which had inherent inconsistencies.

After extensive research into the impact of late registration on student persistence and success, and the desire to help students start off on the right foot, SCC challenged its traditional ways of thinking to create a paradigm shift. In spring 2003, late registration opportunities were moved to the week before school began, and students were advised that they no longer would be allowed to register for a class that had already begun. As an institution, we decided that we wanted students in class—ready, willing, and able to learn from the very first day of class.

The road from thinking about it to actually doing it was long and not without a great deal of consternation. After all, as a community college, we prided ourselves on accessibility and the fact that any student could come to school at any time. What would this mean to us? What would the community think? Perhaps even more callously self-serving, what would this mean for enrollment or for receiving state subsidy? Would we see a significant drop in enrollment? Many on our staff were concerned that shifting registration and not allowing students to enter after a class had begun was a disaster waiting to be implemented.

However, we can tell you unequivocally that the world did not end in spring 2003, when we moved to this new paradigm. For the most part, not only did enrollment not go down, it actually went up. During spring, headcount increased 2.6%, and FTE increased 3.9%; fall term 2003, we experienced a 2.9% increase in headcount and a 4.7% increase in FTE over the previous fall quarter. For a college the size of SCC (23,588 students, fall 2003), that increase was significant. We learned several lessons that might be useful for colleges considering such a move.

First, the change actually will be easier than “getting your head around it.” Most of us have worked in community colleges for all our adult lives, and we are accustomed to the workings of the traditional registration system. The individuals who will be the most difficult to convince that this is the right thing to do will be your own staff, not the students. Planned, strategic internal consensus building
from the top down; marketing; and community involvement are essential.

Second, students comply with whatever institutional policy is presented to them. Our returning students easily moved to the new system, and new students did not know that anything but the current registration model ever existed. Consistent communication from all representatives of the college, multiple reminders in college publications, and numerous marketing materials were essential and cemented the changed thinking into the minds of all students.

Third, there are many benefits associated with this new procedure, including instructors teaching from day one; students not starting three or more days behind their fellow classmates and at an academic disadvantage; college offices that formally strained under the burden of thousands of last-minute students now finding that the pace is slower and that they are able to offer better service to all students. Sinclair has calculated that there are additional long-term benefits that result in improved student retention from quarter to quarter and improved reporting of enrollment data (resulting in increased subsidy).

Are there disadvantages? If there are, we have not seen them yet. We did mount a marketing effort to promote early registration, and we retrained ourselves to understand that a poor late registration practice in the name of access was not necessarily good pedagogy. Should everyone do this? We think so. Will they? Probably not. They might believe it’s the right thing to do, but they fear losing enrollment or worry that it limits access to higher education, just as we believed for so long. Actually, these rationales for not abolishing late registration fly in the face of what we know about a good start to the learning process. In today’s educational environment, should we not be implementing practices and ideas that truly promote student learning and success? Allowing a student to register late, after a class has begun, is not good for learning or for student success.

Sinclair was fortunate enough to have a supportive president, committed collegewide support, and good economic conditions that promoted this positive, innovative model for higher education. We know that improving outcomes does not have to come at the expense of decreased enrollment. We invite you to join us in improving retention and completion rates across the country by becoming involved in success-oriented measures that create optimal learning environments.

Hank Dunn, Vice-President for Student Services
Anna Mays, Director, Student Success Services
For further information, contact the authors at Sinclair Community College
444 West Third Street, Dayton, OH 45402-1460
e-mail: hank.dunn@sinclair.edu, or anna.mays@sinclair.edu
The Effects of Early, Regular, and Late Registration on Community College Student Success: A Case Study.

Authors: Street, Margaret A.; Smith, Albert B.; and Olivarez, Arturo


http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED454896&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED454896

This study examines the differences between students enrolling during the three phases of registration (early, regular, and late) in a two-year college. One purpose of the study was to suggest late registration policy and practices that might improve student success. Registration time, academic records, and demographic information were collected from a stratified random sample of students at one community college in the fall of 1998. Students were grouped according to type (new and returning) and registration time (early, regular, and late). Results indicated that: (1) for both new and returning students, late registrants were shown to be much less likely to persist to the spring semester than were early (returning students only) or regular registrants; (2) of the returning students, 80% of early, 64% of regular, and 42% of late registrants were retained to the next semester; (3) differences in withdrawal rates were significant for both new and returning students; (4) new students who registered on time (regular) withdrew from 10% of their course hours, while those who registered late withdrew from 21%; and (5) returning students differed significantly in their semester grade point average and their successful completion rate based on their time of registration. The report concludes that students should be encouraged to register during early and regular enrollment periods. (JA)

Source of the abstract: ERIC or Author; prior to 2005, abstractor initials appeared at the end of the abstract.