

Prairie View A&M University

Responses to H. B. 1172 Timely Graduation Report Requirements November 2007

The legislation requires information on efforts implemented to help students graduate more quickly:

1. To ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.

Both the Engineering and Architecture undergraduate degree programs are making significant progress towards improved timely graduation. Both programs show steady declines in both credits attempted and mean semesters while increasing the number of graduates. Technology has also shown an improvement in credits attempted and mean semesters, while the Science & Math and Health programs held static for mean semesters. The College of Engineering works closely with its students to ensure timely graduation, particularly in the first year. The college checks student records throughout the first semester to see if the students are on track with the program, and faculty also work closely with University College personnel to help with advising. In addition, Engineering faculty work with math and science faculty to re-open closed classes, as necessary, in order that the student's progress not be delayed. The college has also established a Student Success Center to help students with their critical classes.

The following chart shows progress in the Timely Graduation Report programs:

Program	FY2004			FY2005				FY2006			
	# Grads	Credits Attempted	Mean Semesters	# Grads	Credits Attempted	Mean Semesters	FY04-FY05 % of Change	# Grads	Credits Attempted	Mean Semesters	FY05-FY06 % of Change
Science and Math	49	157	9	53	151	9	-3.8	65	156	9	3.3
Agriculture	13	164	10	12	155	9	-5.5	21	153	10	-1.3
Arts and Architecture	99	168	10	110	164	10	-2.4	153	156	9	-4.9
Business	111	156	10	115	156	9	0.0	102	156	10	0.0
Engineering	29	174	11	59	174	11	0.0	56	161	10	-7.5
Health	72	167	11	58	166	11	-0.6	93	160	11	-3.6
Social Sciences and Service	107	157	9	126	157	9	0.0	145	154	9	-1.9
Technology	43	171	10	43	180	11	5.3	46	167	10	-7.2
	523			576				681			
	164	10		163	10	-0.8		158	10	-3.1	

Source: THECB Timely Graduation Report charts

Under the assumption that college-ready first-year students will have a shorter time-to-graduation than their peers who are not adequately prepared for college work, the institution raised its admission standards for Fall 2004 while simultaneously retaining its mandate to serve the underrepresented populations of the state. The new standards

require a score of 17 and above on ACT or 820 and above on SAT, in addition to a 2.50 and above high school GPA for unconditional admittance to the institution. The institution is now in its third year under the new standards with the number of conditionally enrolled freshmen for Fall 2007 (n=698) lower than for Fall 2004 (n=822). 54.2% of the Fall 2007 freshman class are regular unconditionally enrolled students; 48.6% of the Fall 2004 freshman class was comprised of regular unconditionally enrolled students.

	# Conditional Enrolled	% Conditional Enrolled	# Regular Enrolled*	% Regular Enrolled*	Total Enrolled
Fall 2004	822	51.4%	778	48.6%	1,600
Fall 2005	534	43.6%	688	56.4%	1,222
Fall 2006	626	49.2%	645	50.8%	1,271
Fall 2007	698	45.8%	826	54.2%	1,524

*Includes Regular Unconditional Admits, Re-Admits, and Transfer Freshmen
Source: PVAMU Office of Undergraduate Admissions

The College of Engineering has also instituted additional admission requirements for first-time freshmen: a score of 19 and above on ACT or 930 and above on SAT, in addition to a 3.00 and above high school GPA. Engineering students must also have successfully passed or must be exempt from the THEA exam in all areas. These more stringent entrance requirements should result in fewer students needing to repeat lower level courses, which should in turn result in better time-to-graduation. As these new requirements did not begin until Fall 2005, we will not be able to measure the change until Fall 2009 for four-year graduation rates and Fall 2011 for six-year rates.

The Developmental Education course sequence has been reduced for all tracks (reading/English/mathematics) from four courses to three to move students through the program quicker. The students should thus be able to move into gatekeeper courses such as College Algebra after fewer semesters of Developmental Education, which in turn should lead to fewer semesters needed to graduate. To support these efforts in the Developmental Education program, the institution has joined the Achieving the Dream (AtD) initiative, which will focus on helping students move from the DE sequence through to graduation. Beginning in Fall 2007, AtD cohort students will be tracked along a number of variables, including number of semesters per DE track, success in targeted classes (determined by final grades), and initial standardized test scores.

2. To ensure that undergraduate students do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum number required to complete the students' degree programs.

University College provides early individual intervention and testing (Holland Self Directed Search) of all freshmen students to guide and better prepare them for the selection of a major, including one where interest, ability and preparation are highly concomitant, thus reducing attrition and changing majors which, in turn, delays graduation. All students (except Dept. of Educational Leadership graduate students) are required to receive registration clearance from their academic advisors before registering via the Web, which lets the advisors monitor the course sequencing of their advisees to avoid excess credit hours. Individual course equivalencies between PVAMU and other universities/colleges are also in place to assist in the transition of transfer students to the institution.

The institution has completed a review of degree programs that require more than 120 semester credit hours to determine if there is a sound rationale (e.g., nature of field, specialized accreditation requirements, standards of practice) for requiring more than 120 SCH for the undergraduate degree. Duplication of course content, maintenance of courses due to tradition, and other inefficiencies are being targeted.

3. To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

Advisors from each college/school meet monthly as a group concerning identification and specific advising strategies by discipline (e.g., business, liberal arts) for students. These efforts minimize the wrong sequencing of courses. This program also minimizes attrition and decreases time to degree.

The Colleges of Engineering and Nursing have developed a conditional admit status for students who do not initially meet their minimum admission standards. These students are then specially coded and provided a tailored course of individual alternatives to prepare them academically before they are admitted into the regular program.

The University College, a freshman year program that improves retention by providing centralized, holistic services during the first year, has developed a Panther Pride program built around the concept of learning communities. The program is designed to foster academic success and student engagement, which should improve time-to-graduation. The learning community framework is a component of the Achieving the Dream initiative, which started its cohort year in Fall 2007.

4. To develop an online student degree progress report which compares the courses taken credit received by a student to the courses completed and needed for degree and graduation requirements for each academic term.

For the past few years, the degree audit online has been available 24/7 for students and their advisors to monitor their progress towards graduation. Users are also able to verify what courses transfer from other institutions to PVAMU.

5. To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.

The institution is sensitive to the financial capacity of its students and has worked hard to ensure that all possible students have access to financial aid. The total gross scholarships and fellowships available to students has also increased steadily, from \$22.1 million in FY04 to \$22.7 million (FY05) and \$27.1 million (FY06). Last year, when it was necessary to increase designated tuition to support anticipated cost increases, the President held the line on other fee increases. For the coming year, if certain fees have to be increased, the President has pledged to do all he can to hold the line on our designated tuition rate.

The institution also participates in the Tuition Rebate Program (TEC 54.0065), better known as the "Be On Time" program. If a resident student graduates within four years and within a specific number of hours, the student is eligible for a rebate up to \$1000.