



## First-Time Students: Units Enrolled and Completion Rates

### Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the *WHCCD Research Abstract*. This first edition will look at some of the changes that have taken place since the implementation of priority registration in 2010 and priority registration for high school seniors in 2011.

In following our district's vision of "the relentless pursuit of student success", we as an institution must be willing to review our performance fearlessly and transparently. To that end, this publication will highlight institutional successes as well as shortcomings.

Future editions will vary in length, topic, and formality, but the overall goal for each issue will remain the same: to use district and college data to stimulate discussion and to promote evidence-based change and decision making.

### Timeline

#### Fall 2010

- West Hills Community College District (WHCCD) increases efforts to encourage all students to develop a student educational plan.

#### Fall 2011

- First year requiring matriculation (now SSSP) components to gain early registration and lowering the priority of higher-unit students.
- First-time, fully-matriculated students are given access to priority registration.
- Implementation of "Student Success Teams" where student services are proactively pushed by coordinated teams of counselors, advisors, and financial aid and registration staff.

#### February 2012

- Chancellor Jack Scott visits WHCCD and recognizes the district for its best practices in priority registration.

#### September 2012

- Gov. Brown signs the Student Success Act into law.
- California Community College Board of Governors adopts systemwide enrollment priorities to be implemented in fall 2014.

#### 2013

- Work begins to implement registration policies that will allow students to register for an entire year of classes, rather than a single term at a time. This will go on to be branded as REG365.

#### April 2014

- Rollout of REG365. For the first time ever at WHCCD, students are able to register for summer 2014, fall 2014, and spring 2015 during a single registration period.

### Background

In the lead up to registration for fall 2011, West Hills Community College District implemented a series of changes to its registration system to grant priority registration to graduating high school seniors who completed a FAFSA and their matriculation (now SSSP) requirements: orientation, assessment, and the creation of a student educational plan.

These changes to WHCCD's priority registration system were lauded by Chancellor Scott during his February 2012 visit to the district. Now with three years of data, WHCCD's experience with priority registration, particularly among high school seniors, can provide a window into the impact of priority registration and SSSP services for first-time students.

## Units in Initial Fall Term

Since 2008-09, high school graduates have been enrolling in an increasing number of units during their initial fall term at WHCCD.<sup>1</sup>

During this time period, the proportion of these students enrolling in 12 or more units has increased by 9 percentage points. A large factor in this change has been the increase in the number of students enrolling in 15 or more units.

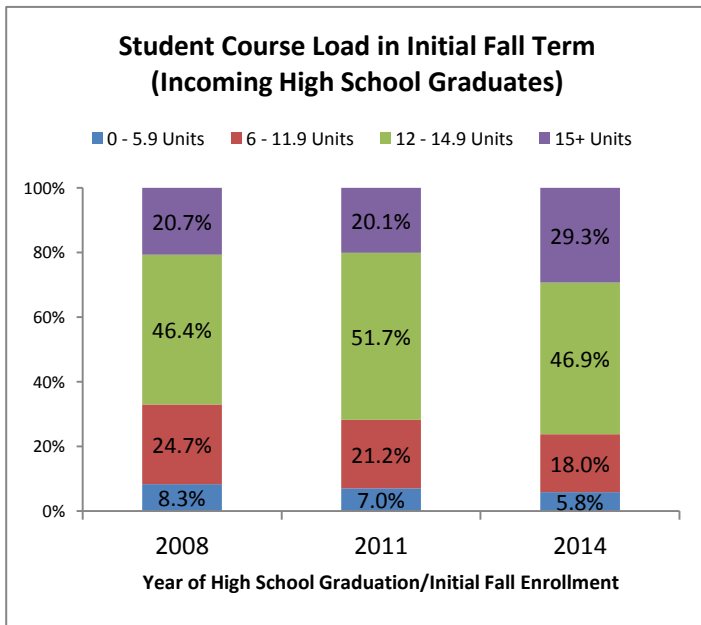


Figure 1 – The percentage of students enrolling full-time, particularly in 15 or more units has increased since fall 2008

## Completion

Based on data from incoming high school graduates from 2008 through 2011, students enrolling full-time (in 12 or more units) during their initial fall term were much more likely to complete a degree, certificate, or transfer within three years.

Additionally, students enrolling in 15 or more units obtained a degree, certificate, or transfer at nearly twice the rate of those taking 12-14.9 units. This compares to a completion rate of less than 8% for students enrolled in fewer than 12 units.

**...students enrolling in 15 or more units obtained a degree, certificate or transfer at nearly twice the rate of those taking 12-14.9 units.**

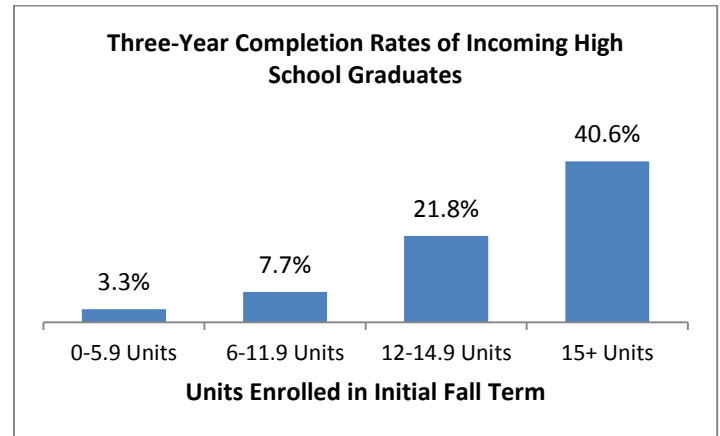


Figure 2 – Three-year completion rates, based on the number of units attempted by incoming high school graduates in their initial fall semester at WHCCD (2008-2011)

Figure 3 shows past and projected two- and three-year completers for 2008 through 2014 among incoming high school graduates.

Projections were based on completion rates for the 2011 cohort, broken out by educational plan status and unit load in the student's initial fall term.

While high school graduates enrolling in the fall term have increased by 1.8% from fall 2011 to fall 2014, it is projected that the number of three-year completers from the high school class of 2014 will increase by 17.4% over the same time period. This increase coincides with an increased number of students with an educational plan<sup>2</sup> and the increased number of students enrolling in a full-time course load;<sup>3</sup> data have shown that both of these factors are associated with faster college completion.

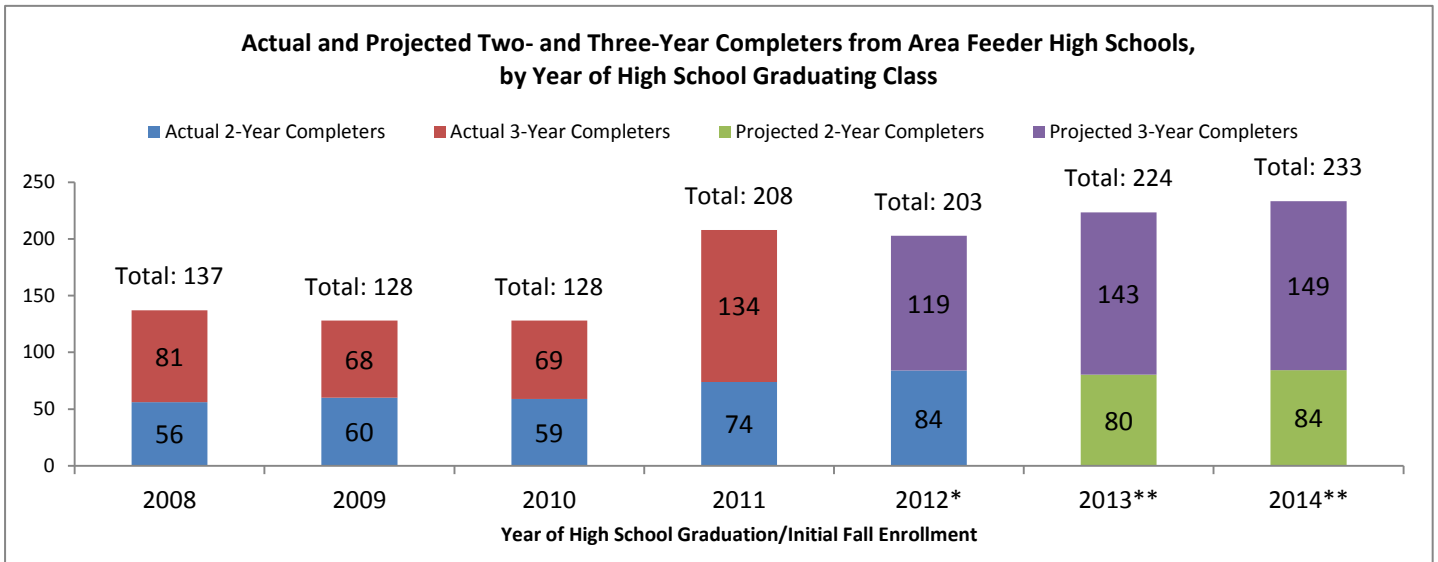


Figure 3 – Actual and projected completers (degree, certificate, or transfer) from feeder high schools

\* 2012 three-year completers are projected based on completion rates from 2011 incoming high school graduates

\*\* 2013 & 2014 two- and three-year completers are projected based on completion rates from 2011 incoming high school graduates

### Room to Grow

The percentage of other first-time students (any student not enrolling for the first time immediately following high school graduation) enrolling full-time in their initial fall term has climbed from 34.5% in fall 2008 to 45.9% in fall 2014. However, these students continue to lag behind incoming high school graduates in terms of full-time enrollment.

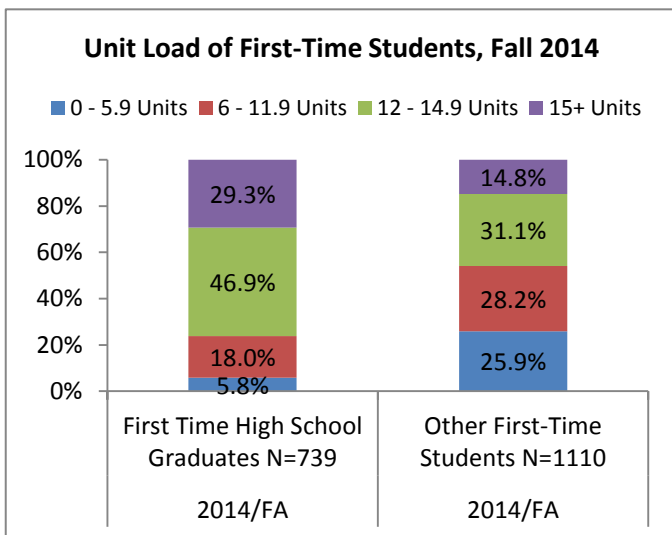


Figure 4 – First-time students not enrolling at WHCCD immediately after high school are less likely to enroll full time when they do start college

Furthermore, in fall 2014, students entering immediately after high school were almost twice as likely to enroll in 15 or more units than other first-time students (29.3% of incoming high school grads vs. 14.8% of other first-timers).

Given that three-year completion rates are virtually the same when comparing first-time high school graduates and other first-time students,<sup>4</sup> an increase in the proportion of other first-time students enrolling full time has the potential to increase annual completers and to shorten time to completion among first-time students.

To this end, priority registration for first-time students, as well as expanded registration options under REG365 can potentially be leveraged to encourage completion-oriented unit loads and more robust educational planning among first-time students.

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## Appendix – Data Statistical Tests

- Analysis of variance testing shows a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.00000802$ ) in average units enrolled for the initial fall term. Post hoc testing using Tukey's test revealed significant differences between the mean units attempted during when comparing 2008 and 2009 to 2013 and 2014.

Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
6	463	77.19	5.619	8.02e-06
Residuals	4594	63116	13.74	

- Chi-squared testing of a 2x2 contingency table based on 3 year completion and educational plan status revealed a statically significant difference in the number of completers among students with an educational plan before enrolling, and those without.

2011 HS Grads Enrolling at WHCCD in Fall 2011	Completed in 3 years or less	Did not complete in three years or less
Ed Plan Before Enrollment	139	350
No Ed Plan Before Enrollment	35	202

X-squared = 16.3397,  
df = 1, p-value = 5.294e-05  
Cramer's V = 0.15

- Chi-squared testing of a 4x2 contingency table comparing the interaction of first-term unit load and three year completion, revealed a statistically significant difference in the number of completers based on first-term unit load. Post hoc testing using the Bonferroni method showed a significant difference between all pairs of unit loads with the exception of the pairing of 0-5.9 units and 6-11.9 units.

	Completed in 3 years or less	Did not complete in three years or less
0 - 5.9 Units	0	51
6 - 11.9 Units	16	138
12 - 14.9 Units	97	278
15+ Units	61	85

X-squared = 57.8222,  
df = 3, p-value = 1.715e-12  
Cramer's V = 0.282

- Three-Year Completion Rates  
(New Students, 2008 through 2011)

Units Enrolled in Initial Fall Term	Incoming High School Graduates	Other First-Time Students
0-5.9 Units	3%	3%
6-11.9 Units	8%	9%
12-14.9 Units	22%	22%
15+ Units	41%	41%

### About WHCCD Institutional Effectiveness

The WHCCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) serves as the official source of statistical information for WHCCD and its colleges. The OIE is committed to providing accurate, actionable, and timely measures of institutional progress to help guide decisions toward continuous improvements of academic programs, policy, systems, and services.



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**DISTRICT** 9900 Cody Street, Coalinga, CA 93210 (559) 934-2100 [www.westhillscollge.com](http://www.westhillscollge.com)  
**COALINGA** 300 Cherry Lane, Coalinga, CA 93210 (559) 934-2000 [www.westhillscollge.com/coalinga](http://www.westhillscollge.com/coalinga)  
**LEMOORE** 555 College Ave., Lemoore, CA 93245 (559) 925-3000 [www.westhillscollge.com/lemoore](http://www.westhillscollge.com/lemoore)