

Late Registration Task Force summary and recommendations

Delta College

June 2011

During May and June, 2011, a Taskforce was assembled to consider the issue of eliminating late registration at Delta College. Members of the Taskforce included David Baskind, Brigit Dyer, Tom Wells, Lisa O'Laughlin, Casey Cornelius, Bonnie Good, Renee Hoppe, Diana Gutierrez, Keith Malkowski, Gary Brasseur, Lauren Smith, David Redman, Adna Howell, and Carla Murphy. The Taskforce met four times over the course of the two months.

The committee gathered information from other colleges, discussed current Delta policies and examined current Delta data. The current policy is that Delta College will only allow a student to join a class after the first meeting if the instructor signs an 'Add' slip. This policy is in line with many other colleges. A student is counted as 'late-registering' if s/he is officially added to the class roster after the first day of class. These students must have the instructor sign an 'Add' slip to register late. However, students might also need a signed 'Add' slip if the instructor decides to increase the class size ('overload'). The current policy for adding classes can be found in the Senate Handbook, policy 4.015.

The Taskforce learned that No Late Registration means different things at different colleges. At some schools, this means exactly what it is says, in that students cannot registration late under any circumstance. However, some schools say they have a No Late Registration policy. However, in actuality, Late Registration is allowed only with instructor and/or dean permission. This is Delta's current policy, and it is the policy of nearly all of the colleges throughout Michigan.

We learned that approximately 900 students per semester (Fall and Winter) registered late for a class. That said, we learned that some of those 900 students actually registered on time (overload), however their paperwork did not get into the registrar's office until after the semester had begun. Thus, they were counted as 'late'. Further, some 'late' students actually registered on time, but they needed to transfer to a different class that was more in line with their ability and/or need ('offset'). Also in this count were students who enrolled on time, but were dropped by an instructor (i.e., the student did not show up on day #2 and #3) but who were later allowed to re-enroll by the instructor.

Of the students who were officially counted as registering late, we learned that about 100 of these students had actually enrolled on time (add slip signed before the first day of class), however their paperwork did not go through Delta's system until after the semester had begun. In sum, our data showed that approximately 900 students are counted as late-registering when in reality, it may be closer to 800 students who truly registered late for a class.

Of the late-registering students, approximately 200 are enrolled in Developmental Education (Dev ED) courses. Of those 200, about 120 (60%) complete the course successfully (finish the semester with a grade of C or better).

Of those 900 late-registering students, approximately 600 are successful, meaning they completed that class with a grade of C or higher. This 2/3 success rate is lower than the college's overall success rate of about 82%. So, the Taskforce considered the impact on the college if Late Registration was eliminated across the board.

Eliminating late registration at Delta would mean that approximately 600 students who would have been successful would now not be allowed to join our classes. This could have major financial and other implications for the college.

That said, we are concerned about the approximately 300 students who register late and do not succeed.

To look at the data in greater depth, we see that about 67% of the approximately 900 late registering students succeed. (This equals about 600 students.) This compares to the 82% of 'on-time' students who succeed. Presumably, then, had the 900 registered on-time, about 738 students (82%) would have succeeded. This then is an increase of about 138 successful students. Had those 900 not been allowed to register on-time, some might join our late-starting classes. However, some might go to a different college/university or they might choose not to enroll in college at this time. Potentially, we would have turned away about 600 students who might have succeeded. Eliminating the late-registering students might increase our overall success rate from 82%, but the impact would be minimal given that we have about 11,000 students per semester. Closing our doors on 900 students would have a much bigger impact on the college.

We addressed the fact that many students make last-minute decisions and decide to enroll at Delta College. Further, some have thought about enrolling in college for a while, waited patiently on the waitlist, and joined when the instructor allowed them to do so. We considered how eliminating Late Registration would impact our reputation within the community as being able to serve those who have had a change in life circumstance.

After weighing all of the evidence, considering many of the implications, and considering what the term 'No Late Registration' truly means, the Taskforce has reached the conclusion that we should keep our current policy in place.

That said, though, our Taskforce did want to make some specific recommendations:

1. We believe that it is very important for students to enroll on-time and to be in class on the first day. The college should continue to encourage students to do so.
2. We believe that it is acceptable for students to switch sections ('offset') under certain circumstances (enrolled in wrong section, switch to a different day/time with the same instructor, etc.). The policy for allowing offset was considered appropriate by the Taskforce.

3. We believe that instructors should continue to take the waitlist seriously. Students wishing to add a specific class should be given first priority based on their order on the waitlist. Students not on the waitlist should be considered afterwards.
4. We believe that instructors should consider increasing class capacity in advance of the semester, rather than allowing students to join class close to (or after) the start date. This would allow students to register on-time and would ensure that they could be there for the first day of class.
5. We believe students should first meet with an academic adviser, a counselor, a division chair, a dean, or a College Vice President before asking faculty to sign the 'Add' slip. The student should discuss the reason for wanting to add a class after the start date and the College employee can discuss the implications of starting a class late. The 'Add' slip would need to be changed to leave space for one of these people to sign it. Second, there should be a place on the form where the student describes why s/he is registering late for the class(es). That said, the Taskforce believes that ultimately it should continue to be up to the faculty member to determine whether to add this student.
6. We believe that faculty should ask students why they are registering late. Faculty should also let students know the repercussions of having missed the first class meeting(s).
7. We believe that faculty should use extra caution when deciding to let a student register late for a Developmental Education (Dev ED) course. The success rates for late-registering students in Dev ED classes are about 10% lower than the rates for late-registering students in non-Developmental classes.
8. We believe the college should continue to acquire more information regarding the approximately 300 late-registering students who are not successful.