CABRILLO COLLEGE URGES STUDENTS TO GRADUATE

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APTSAs As Cabrillo College began classes on Tuesday, more students had a plan to graduate, thanks to state and federal regulations starting this fall.

The state now requires all community college students to meet with an academic counselor to form an education plan, laying out courses for at least two semesters.

The rule is part of the 2012 Student Success Act, regulations designed to move more students through community college faster. The plan includes a ban on repeating classes, effective last fall.

According to Cabrillo’s fact book, 47 percent of students receive a degree, certificate or enough credits to transition within six years. On average, Cabrillo students take eight years to earn an associate degree, according to Terrence Willett, director of planning, research and knowledge systems.

Many students juggle work, families and class and are forced to enroll part time, he said.

The added counseling will likely result in higher graduation rates, said Enid Bailey-Fougner, Cabrillo’s vice president of student services. Counselors began meetings this spring, and so far half of Cabrillo students have a plan, he said.

“When someone has an education plan, they definitely know where they’re going,” Bailey-Fougner said.

Also new this fall, federal financial aid is now limited to 150 percent of program length. For example, if a student chooses a degree requiring 60 units, financial aid will only cover 90 units, leaving less room for electives.

Further to qualify for federal aid, students must have an education plan.

“Both [the Student Success Act and federal aid changes] are saying you have to be through in less time,” Bailey-Fougner said.

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Online courses are taught by Cabrillo faculty, and some include a lab or in-person discussion sections.

An attractive option for students with jobs and busy schedules, Cabrillo’s online classes draw around 1,300 to 1,400 students each semester, said Willett.

Ben Presley, a Cabrillo football player and second-year international business student, said he’s an campus more than 12 hours each day. He works part-time on campus while also taking 15 units, and is enrolled in two online courses this fall.

Presley said he’s enjoyed taking online courses, since it allows him to work during breaks between class, job and practices.

“It’s whenever I’m available, I can work it in rather than 8 a.m.,” Presley said.

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Class Availability

Enrollment is down 1 to 2 percent from a year ago and classes are 80 percent full, said Kathleen Welch, vice president of instruction.

Classes that aren’t filled will be canceled and funding redirected toward adding classes with waitlists, she said.

New offerings include an energy management associate degree training building professionals and contractors in sustainable building and solar technology, taught at the Watsonville campus Solaris Green Technology Center.

Also new this fall are two soccer and baseball coaching classes that lead toward U.S. Soccer and American Sport Education certification.

Highly popular this fall, said Welch, are Cabrillo’s online classes, offered across all disciplines. Unlike massive online open courses, these courses are capped at around 50 students, she said.

Student Success Act encourages quicker completion, higher graduation rates

She said she didn’t have any trouble signing up for her classes, which are now all full.

Due to the Student Success Act, Cabrillo has changed which students get to sign up first. Now veterans, foster youth, disabled and low-income students with children or academic support get first priority. Then follows continuing students and finally, new students.

New this fall, students with less than a 2.0 GPA or more than 100 Cabrillo units lose their priority registration.

Adam Fernandez, 18, tried to register for his math and English courses two weeks ago, but was waitlisted. A second-year Cabrillo student, he showed up on Tuesday hoping for room, but had no luck, he said. He sat outside the bookstore, empty-handed.

“I’m probably going to skip out this semester and try again next semester,” Fernandez said.

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What: Enrollment open until Sept. 12. For a list of classes with available seats, visit www.cabrillo.edu/onlineregistration.

To register: www.cabrillo.edu.

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