

CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO

History of College Success Seminar Course

During the Summer of 2005 the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) embarked on a monumental project to recalibrate the curriculum of the City Colleges to be more reflective of the 21 century globalized society. The motivating factor was to better prepare CCC students to be competitive educationally as well as in the workforce.

The Recalibration project was composed of faculty, select staff, and administrators. After defining the Recalibration process for conducting the reviews, three areas were identified for closer analysis. The three areas included: Developmental Education, Adult Education, and Student Support Services. After exploring Best Practices around the country in relation to these three areas, and reviewing award winning models for effective programs, many recommendations emerged for implementation at the City Colleges.

One recommendation which emerged from the Developmental Education review has resulted in the establishment of a Developmental Education Department at the City Colleges of Chicago to address the growing developmental/remedial/transitional needs of students accessing the City Colleges of Chicago for educational attainment. A continuous theme which emerged across all three areas was the need for an Orientation course of sorts to assist students with adjusting to college life, its expectations, and acquiring the necessary skills to be successful in college.

An Orientation Task Force was appointed to design an Orientation course. The Task Force consisted of faculty and administrators. Co-chaired by Dr. Pervez Rahman - Vice President at Truman College, and Cynthia D. Armster – Associate Vice Chancellor, the Task Force reviewed various models of successful Orientation courses. Due to Dr. Rahman's affiliation with DePaul University and its award winning nationally recognized Freshman Year Experience program, this model was adopted for CCC's College Success course framework.

Securing Dr. Mark Pohlad, DePaul's FYE Coordinator, as a consultant on the project the course curriculum was designed for the City Colleges and the name College Success Seminar (CSS) was selected. The newly designed CSS course was vetted and approved by the District's Faculty Council as well as CCC's administration for a 1-year pilot to begin summer 2007. Faculty and staff selected to teach the course were required to attend 18 hours of training to become certified to teach the CSS course via the College Success Seminar Institute (CSSI). Three colleges piloted the course in the summer of 2007, with a total of five offering the course in the fall of 2007. By 2012 six of the seven colleges offered multiple sections of the course.

An analysis of College Success data each year reveals a significant impact in semester to semester retention, course(s) completion, and student performance of CSS students compared to their peers. Thus, the data substantiated that students enrolled in College Success Seminar course performed better academically. It became apparent that the course was a much needed tool for retention of students and positively impacted their success. In Fall of 2012 CCC's Board of Trustees approved the College Success Seminar course to be taught by full time faculty as part of load. College Success becomes the cornerstone for retention efforts and is designated mandatory for entering students across City Colleges of Chicago district by Fall 2014 with a standardized curriculum for all colleges and programs.

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