

October 18, 2005

To: SAC Chairs

From: The Prerequisite Implementation Committee

Re: For SAC in-service discussion and consideration

History of the Prerequisite Policy Recommendation

As most of you know, the Educational Advisory Council, the body that advises the district president on academic issues and holds a majority faculty membership, endorsed a policy recommendation to place basic skill prerequisites on General Education transfer courses. The EAC was impressed by PCC research and national studies demonstrating a clear correlation between student preparation in basic skills and student success. If you'd like to peruse these studies, as well as the policy endorsed by the EAC and the administration, please go to the Policy Committee website:

<http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/eac/policy/>.

The basic skill prerequisites will be satisfied by the following:

a "C" or higher grade in WR 115, **or** reading and writing placement scores for WR 121, a "C" or higher grade in RD 115, **or** college-level reading skills demonstrated by an ASSET reading score of at least 45 (or a Compass score of 88), and a "C" or higher grade in MTH 20 or placement into MTH 60.

It is very important to note that these prerequisites still represent skills at a pre-college level: however, they will signify *readiness* for college-level reading and writing as well as *readiness* for math generally considered to be at the **9th-grade** level.

By endorsing the policy, the EAC felt it was reflecting the overall sentiment of faculty across the disciplines and throughout the district. To solicit faculty (and student) sentiment, the EAC held forums on all three campuses, sought opinions and concerns through email, and offered open discussions during the Policy Committee and EAC meetings (this process began in September, 2004, and ended with the EAC's endorsement in June of 2005—the policy recommendation then went to President Pulliams, and he endorsed it as well). One of the clear messages communicated by both students and faculty (a message that went beyond research linking preparation with student success and retention) was that class time was often spent going over remedial skills and concepts and thus diluted course content. Equally strong, however, was faculty concern that DE-level students currently in their courses (reading and writing at a 8th or 10th grade level, for example) would have the necessary DE courses open for them after any prerequisite policy requirement became effective, and that their financial aid would not be jeopardized.

The EAC believed that by properly communicating the significance of basic skill preparation, the college would maintain its open access for all PCC students, although with the new policy, the college would direct all students through its doors with

guidelines steering them to the most appropriate skill level (based on research and the intent of helping more of them succeed in college).

The EAC felt strongly that if this prerequisite policy were implemented in the right way, the college would better serve our students by increasing the likelihood of success in college-level courses—most of which require basic competencies in reading, writing, and math. Part of the EAC's policy recommendation called for an implementation committee that would be responsible for identifying potential barriers for students and to take actions that would eliminate those barriers. This committee, which began meeting in September, will be communicating with SACs and the college community as a whole throughout the next two years as we prepare for the fall 2007 implementation date.

While SACs can petition to excuse particular courses from the prerequisite policy, the EAC expects most SACs will agree that our students will have a stronger educational experience and succeed in higher numbers if they have the basic skills in place before they take college-level courses.

What SACs need to discuss and consider for the in-service on October 25, 2005:

- We would like SACs to seriously consider helping the college prepare students for the prerequisite requirement—during the transition period before the requirement kicks in—by adding language in the prerequisite portion of the course descriptions that would strongly recommend students strengthen their abilities in basic reading, writing, and math. Our goal is to communicate the message to as many students as possible that strengthening their skills—and bringing them up to a level where they can experience more success in college courses—should be one of their highest priorities.
- If your SAC is considering placing prerequisites on some or all of your courses before the deadline of fall 2007, please let us know: planning to accommodate the correct number of students affected by this policy is one of the committee's mandates, and this information would be very helpful to us. Some SACs have already implemented basic skill prerequisites: Psychology is the most recent, placing prereqs in place in fall 2005 (it is important to note that they didn't experience a noticeable decline in enrollment).
- As we move through this process over the next two years, the Prerequisite Committee welcomes SAC input as we try to reduce barriers for students, enhance their educational experience, and increase the likelihood of their success in higher education. Attached is a list of committee members and leaders: **please let us know if you have concerns or feedback** that will help us with the implementation process.

Please see next page for committee chairs, and the enclosed attachment of members at large.

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The Prerequisite Implementation Committee Chairs