

Results of Achieving the Dream Focus Group Session:
Math 060, Monday, November 27, 2006

[Note: all students were in the 15-24 age group]

What do you see as the PRIMARY factors that prevent students from completing courses at DCCC?

- Students have different learning styles. Some are visual, some are auditory learners. For visual learners, it helps if the instructor puts problems on the board, or writes them out. *(female Caucasian)*
- Students work at different paces. It would help if teachers were available more often for 1-to-1 work with students. *(female Black/African-American)*
- Some students go off pace – they start doing work for other classes in the individualized Math 060 lab – or they don't do any work. More supervision is needed. *(male Caucasian)*
- Need tutors during the individualized class – more help – it is too much for one instructor. *(female Black/African-American)*
- I hit a really hard chapter – met with tutor 2 times a week and with instructor, but am still behind. Need more time. Maybe Tuesday/Thursday schedule would be better than Monday/Wednesday/Friday, because class is longer. I do go to the lab outside of scheduled class time, but it is filled – all computers are taken 90% of the time. *(male Caucasian)*
- Tuition is a problem. Some have trouble paying. Financial aid should be available to more students. I only got half of my tuition paid, and then I needed to buy books. Lack of aid leads students to work more hours. Then they have less time for class work. *(female Black/African-American)*
- Friend dropped out of this class. It is supposed to be “at your own pace”, but if you don't understand it you can't meet deadlines for the class and then students drop out. Wasn't well enough prepared by high school work. Some need 1 to 1 help from instructor, not just help through the computer. I'm still on chapter 4 – feel it isn't “at my own pace”. Advised at college planning, after taking placement test, to take this class, but can't keep up with the work. *(female Black/African-American)*
- Would do better in regular class, like in high school. *(female Caucasian)*
- Individualized class is helpful for me, but need more time. *(female Black/African-American)*
- Started in 040 – this is OK for me – but when I get stuck there is only 1 teacher and I can't get help right away. *(female Caucasian)*

What do you see as the PRIMARY factors that prevent students from reenrolling for additional semesters at DCCC?

- Financial aid – financial aid application lost by the aid office – had to reapply, get emergency loan in the meantime – couldn't get enough aid to cover tuition and books. Did well in high school, thought I should get more

- aid. Filled out FAFSA electronically, before August – brought it to college in person. Was without a book until mid to late September because of financial aid delay. Transportation is another issue, buses not on time, making students late and some instructors then count you absent. Buses also delay students getting from DCCC to work. It seems like SEPTA doesn't care about them. Buses "mess it up for a lot of people". *[assent from others in class]* Frequency of late buses? Every other day, 5 – 30 minutes late. Need designated buses. *(female Black/African-American)*
- Books too expensive. Psychology book was almost \$200 and used it only twice. *(female Black/African-American)*

What do you see as the PRIMARY factors that prevent students from completing a degree or certificate at DCCC?

- Other obligations – some students have kids, need to work; day care is needed. *(female Caucasian)*
- Going for Nursing degree. Waiting list is "entirely too long". Maybe another department of Nursing would help. *(female Black/African-American)*
- *[Asked who planned to get a degree or certificate, 8 planned to finish at DCCC. Around 10-12 plan to transfer. Students showed interest in "special deals" – core-to-core articulation agreements.]*

Question from Charlene Nunley: What led to their placement in developmental class?

- Ridley High School English department is really good, but the math department is not good. Took senior track 2 math, was lost at DCCC at first in math – English class was OK. *(male Caucasian)*
- Can use calculators in high school, not in placement test – wasn't ready for that. *(male Caucasian)*
- Got a 98% in algebra in high school – calculators were allowed *(female Black/African-American)* *[many other students indicated their agreement with this].*
- Calculators don't help you with algebra. Math 060 is harder than high school algebra. *(male Caucasian)*
- Honors in high school geometry – struggling at DCCC – hadn't done factoring in several years. *(male Caucasian)*
- Was told Math 060 would be easier but I need to talk to the teacher "all the time". *(female Caucasian)*
- Avoided tougher math courses in high school. *(female Black/African-American)*
- "My math teacher did me wrong". He's a cool person, but everybody got an A from him. Didn't prepare me well – he joked around a lot. I saw him recently and let him know how poorly I was prepared. *(female Black/African-American)*

- Math requirements haven't changed recently at high schools – math was sometimes a prerequisite for another course like psychology. (*male Caucasian*)
- Math course required in freshman/sophomore years of high school. No math required second semester senior year – forgot a lot. (*male Caucasian*)[*assent from other students*]

Question from Tom Smith: Who advised you about high school course selection?

- They gave you a sheet and told you to pick your classes. You could avoid harder math courses. (*male Caucasian*)
- Can pick electives instead (*Upper Darby student*) The graduation project takes all of your focus and time senior year. (*female Black/African-American*)

Question from Jerry Parker: Any advice for high schools?

- No calculators.
- Require math in last 2 years. (*female Black/African-American*)
- Math mandatory every year. Didn't think I'd be able to go to college, so wasn't planning courses around it. (*female Black/African-American*)
- I'm a poor test taker. Individualized math shouldn't be based so much on the test – should count work done during semester, as well as course participation. (*female Caucasian*)
- Participation should be graded. (*female Black/African-American*)