



**Responses to H.B. 1172
Timely Graduation Report Requirements
November 2006**

This document reports on the efforts at West Texas A&M University to insure that its undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.

1. *To ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.*

West Texas A&M University employs several strategies to ensure timely graduation of its students. This effort begins prior to students enrolling at the University and continues through their collegiate career.

Efforts Prior to University Enrollment

- P-12 Outreach efforts emphasizing completing degrees in 4 years
- College for Texans materials and campaign messages
- University campus tours and Open House programs emphasize completion of a degree within four years
- University CAMP and Upward Bound programs emphasize the financial benefits of full-time enrollment to its participants

Efforts Targeted at Enrolled Students

- Accepting credit earned by examination, such as the CLEP and AP for many introductory courses
- Offering dual credit courses to qualified area high school students
- Offering two inter-sessions and two summer sessions each academic year that allow students to progress towards their degree at a faster rate
- Offering online and correspondence classes to accommodate students with diverse schedules and/or that live at a distance so that more students can take a full load during a semester
- Advertising the \$1,000 Tuition Rebate for students who complete within three hours of the requirements of their degree plan
- Emphasizing that students at the freshman orientations are members of the graduating class four years from the date of their orientation, e.g., "The Class of 2010"
- Emphasizing at freshman orientation through presentations and printed publications the importance of taking at least 15 credit hours in each semester as a key strategy to complete a degree within four years
- Educating students at freshman orientation about the higher cost of a degree by taking fewer hours and longer to graduate

- Advocating through advising networks and particularly at freshman orientations, that students increase their semester credit hour enrollment to 15 semester hours each semester
- Offering a student success course (IDS 1071) to assist students in successfully starting their undergraduate career
- Offering academic support services to assist students if needed
- Offering developmental math, reading and writing courses to help students who need to brush up on any of these skills to succeed in college level courses
- Providing an intensive first year program for students from migrant, first generation college student backgrounds (CAMP)
- Offering summer learning communities and bridge programs (ex University Success Academy and the Upward Bound Bridge Program) for first generation students
- Providing a Supplemental Instruction (SI) study program designed to help students improve their study techniques thereby raising their grades. The SI program is based on the principle that students improve their mastery of a subject through interaction and discussions of difficult principles with other students. The SI leader (a peer student) reinforces the main concepts from the lecture, shares problem-solving techniques, provides test reviews, and gives practice tests and quizzes before the actual test. Students that participate in SI typically perform at a higher level than students in the same class that do not.
- Offering the WTAMU Virtual Math Lab, a nationally recognized online math support system that is available for students needing additional assistance in College Algebra, Intermediate Algebra, Beginning Algebra, or preparing for the math part of the THEA, ACCUPLACER or general GRE test.
- Advertising to students in advance, upper level courses that may be required for degree completion but are not offered every semester, are advertised to students in advance so they may plan schedules accordingly
- Offering comprehensive course schedule options so that students are not limited to degree completion because of course availability limitations
- Mandatory advising of all students prior to registering for any semester
- Keeping tuition and fees costs as low as possible to decrease student financial burdens that may impact time-to-graduation
- Voluntarily decreasing degree requirements by four hours, ahead of the scheduled state requirements to reduce most degree programs to 120 hours by fall 2008
- Reminding students through frequent e-mails, posters, and campus newspaper articles of the down side of dropping classes while simultaneously promoting free tutoring and other help available to guide students to success
- Researching the feasibility of a designated tuition structure where tuition for a 12 to 18 credit hour range is paid at 15 credit hour level. This tuition fee structure will encourage students to take at least 15 credit hours and reward students taking 18 credit hours.

- Increasing student commitments to their timely degree completion and their course planning by changing registration rules and fees and by publicizing the savings opportunities and potential costs through emails, posters and articles
 - First, the University moved up its last day to drop a course by approximately a month. This strategy strives to encourage students to stay committed to completing courses rather than having the option to drop at the last minute
 - Second, the University implemented a financial incentive for students to plan their semesters in advance, to register for courses and to pay for courses in advance which can net students a savings of over \$100 a semester. These changes are known as “Priority Registration” and “Late Registration”.

2. To ensure that undergraduate students do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum number required to complete the students’ degree programs.

The University implements the following strategies to accomplish this goal.

- Mandatory advising of all students prior to registering for any semester
- Early and frequent notification of 45-Hour Rule penalties for excessive attempted hours
- Imposing out-of-state tuition upon 45-Hour Rule students
- Frequently notifying students of the “3-peat” rule by which students must pay out of state tuition for a course attempted a third time
- E-mails, posters and articles reminding students of the disadvantages of dropping courses
- Making current degree programs available in the University catalog and online

3. To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

- Mandatory advising of all undergraduate students prior to registering for any semester
- Emphasizing that students at the freshman orientations are members of the graduating class four years from the date of their orientation, e.g., “The Class of 2010”
- Emphasizing at freshman orientation through presentations and printed publications the importance of taking at least 15 credit hours in each semester as a strategy to complete a degree within four years
- Educating students about the higher cost of a degree by taking longer to graduate. The freshmen orientation handbook demonstrates this to parents and students with facts and figures
- Offering intrusive academic and/or tutoring services through various student academic success services (CAMP, Student Support Services, STARR Center, Math, Reading, and Writing Labs and Educational Services) to keep students on track for timely graduation

- Offering the STARR Center Academic Probation program to assist students on probation to make the right choices to get off probation and continue their education
- 4. To develop an online student degree progress report which compares the courses taken and credit received by a student to the courses completed and needed for degree and graduation requirements for each academic term.**
- The University student information system has been expanded to offer vast services to students online through what is known as “Buff Advisor.” This system has many capabilities for student registration, degree audit, course planning, etc.
 - At this time, the University is in the research phase of implementing the Student Educational Planning Module from the Datatel *Colleague* system that will enable students and advisers to plan their college course-taking semesters and years in advance
- 5. To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.**
- Increasing student commitments to their timely degree completion and their course planning by changing registration rules and fees and by publicizing the savings opportunities and potential costs through emails, posters and articles
 - First, the University moved up its last day to drop a course by approximately a month. This strategy strives to encourage students to stay committed to completing courses rather than having the option to drop at the last minute
 - Second, the University implemented a financial incentive for students to plan their semesters in advance, to register for courses and to pay for courses in advance which can net students a savings of over \$100 a semester. These changes are known as Priority and Late Registration.
 - Advertising the \$1,000 Tuition Rebate for students who complete within three hours of the requirements of their degree plan