Update on Reducing Bottlenecks: Student Survey Results

CSU Board of Trustees
Item 3 Committee on Educational Policy
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In summer 2013, an online survey to research bottleneck courses was conducted with 791 CSU department chairs reporting for a 91% response rate.

Survey focused on a common definition of bottleneck courses of which 1,294 were identified impacting 44,130 students in the 2012-2013 academic year.

Reasons for the bottlenecks were reported but the impact on students was outside the scope of the study.

To determine student impact, a proportional random sample of 387 students was selected from all those who faced a bottleneck course from all campuses in 2012-2013 (+/- 5% margin of error).

The confidential survey consisted of 30 open- and closed-ended questions administered via the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.

Data collection concluded February 11, 2014.
CSU Student Survey: Key Questions

• If students encountered a bottleneck course, in what ways were they impacted? In addition:
  o Did students seek help from an adviser?
  o Would students have been willing to:
    ▪ Take an online section if one was available?
    ▪ Attend a section offered in the evening if available?
    ▪ Attend a section offered on Saturday if available?
    ▪ Attend a section offered on Sunday if available?
  o Key Demographics:
    ▪ First in family to attend college?
    ▪ Financial aid status?
    ▪ Age/Gender/Ethnicity
    ▪ College level (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior)
Is the bottleneck course *really* a bottleneck?

- Delayed progress to degree
- Scheduling conflicts: *Work, family, etc.*
- Found alternative courses/substitutions

 ייתן נפגעים

- גרוע נפגעים
- לא נפגעים
Bottleneck Courses: STUDENT IMPACT

165 students were *negatively* impacted

387 students could not register in bottleneck courses...

222 students were *not* impacted
Students who reported encountering a bottleneck course in fall 2012:

• Paid more money to take courses during winter and summer intersessions to stay on pace to graduate

• Took unnecessary classes to maintain financial aid eligibility

• Required adjustments to class schedules that interfered with work, family and transportation

• Increased unit loads in subsequent semesters to “catch up”

• Could not enroll in required prerequisites which prevented enrolling in other major courses

• Some changed their major

• **Some had their degree progress delayed** (n=103)
Bottleneck Courses Impacting Students’ Progress to Degree

- Liberal Arts: 65 courses (37%)
- STEM: 62 courses (35%)
- Health & Human Svcs: 26 courses (15%)
- Business: 20 courses (11%)
- Arts: 4 courses (2%)

Total = 177 bottleneck courses
Of the 103 students whose degree progress was impacted, the survey revealed:

- No significant differences when comparing the demographic variables between students who were impacted by bottlenecks and those who were not
- Juniors and seniors were disproportionately impacted (68.7%) compared to freshmen and sophomores (31.3%)
- Bottlenecks were much more concentrated in major courses (74.6%) compared to those in general education (25.4%)
- Bottleneck courses increased the time to degree by:
  - 1 or 2 quarters (3.9%)
  - at least one semester (76.7%)
  - one year (19.4%)
- 46% took classes they did not need to maintain financial aid eligibility
- 83.7% would have taken an online section, 87.8% an evening section, 71.4% on Saturday and 44.9% on Sunday if offered
- 35.9% never sought help from an adviser
To further reduce the number of bottlenecks in the CSU, the following recommendations include:

- **Focusing resources on the core problems identified in the surveys**
- **Focusing new initiatives and funding on STEM, Liberal Arts and Health & Human Services**
- **Focusing new initiatives on bottleneck courses embedded in the majors**
- **Incentivizing faculty to develop online programs in academic departments where bottleneck courses historically occur and provide necessary training**
- **Forging policy recommendations in concert with academic leadership and statewide Academic Senate as appropriate**
Thank You

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