

Consistent Outreach, Strategic Management, and Supportive Policies Help Students Benefit from CLEP® Opportunities



Western Kentucky University (WKU) in Bowling Green, Ky., administers the largest number of CLEP® exams in the state. In the 2013-14 academic year, more than 600 students took advantage of credit-earning opportunities through the CLEP program, with students earning an impressive 2,146 credit hours.

WKU administrators credit an innovative outreach effort with the program's steady growth over the past several years. They also note that the university's policies about accepting credits for nearly every CLEP exam have contributed to their success in increasing the number of students taking CLEP exams and earning credit for prior learning.

Creating Opportunities for Student Success

When planning the university's CLEP outreach initiative, WKU's testing center administrator first coordinated with the admission office and asked to participate in freshman orientation. During these orientation sessions, freshmen and their parents typically attend an informational presentation. Many parents were unaware that students could take CLEP exams in their junior and senior years of high school and they asked why they hadn't heard about the CLEP program earlier.



Talking to parents and talking to advisers are the two most important things and the best use of my resources.”

Sharon Ercey
Coordinator of Testing

The question inspired WKU leaders to take action. They began sending letters and a CLEP brochure to high school counselors in the near and surrounding areas to introduce the testing center and the WKU team. The following year they reached out to incoming freshmen whose college entrance exam scores indicated they were qualified as good candidates for CLEP testing by mail. The response was encouraging but WKU had their sights set on bigger goals.

The WKU team then began to focus more on the outreach to parents and families, with many of the conversations focused on the solid financial benefits of earning college credit through CLEP exams.

Connecting with Internal Audiences and Stakeholders

The WKU team learned that its own campus advisers needed current and consistent information about the CLEP program. WKU's Campus Advising Network (CAN) meets monthly and the testing center team continues to make presentations about the university's CLEP program at this important staff event. These events have been so successful in encouraging students to take CLEP exams that the university's business college paid for CLEP brochure printing. This brochure is available at the testing center and throughout the campus. WKU operates several regional campuses, and testing center managers have also presented several informational meetings on-site at these campuses, making sure that the entire 20,000+ student body is aware of the CLEP program, how it works, and where they can access additional information.

In addition, testing center managers have worked with the high schools near the university's regional campuses to set up special CLEP testing times. The testing center on the main campus also uses flexible scheduling to accommodate students' needs and timing. It's another example of the way WKU is creating opportunities for student success, beginning at the high school level.

Making Policy Work for Students and the University

WKU accepts credit for 32 of the 33 CLEP exams. The WKU policies and procedures have evolved over the years. Previously, credit equivalencies needed to be reviewed through curriculum channels. In the last several years, the new policy empowers department chairs to determine equivalency. As a result, students face fewer barriers in earning credits for prior learning.

Policy Paves the Way for Other Institutions in Kentucky

Kentucky House Bill 160, passed during the 2010 legislative session, paved the way to a policy guaranteeing college credit at all the state's public four-year universities and two-year community and technical colleges to students earning qualifying scores through the College Board's Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) and College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP) exams. The policy was crafted to help students reduce college costs and increase the number of students graduating on time. The policy states that students of all ages need to earn a qualifying score of 50 or higher on a CLEP exam to earn college credit.

www.lrc.ky.gov/record/10rs/hb160.htm

WKU CLEP® by the Numbers

Western Kentucky granted more than 2,000 hours of CLEP credit to students during the 2013-14 academic year. By engaging in outreach to high school counselors, parents of high school students, and incoming freshmen, and by continuously communicating with internal advisers, counselors, faculty, and administrators throughout the university community, WKU helps students receive valuable information about CLEP opportunities and benefits. University policies have also been streamlined to provide rapid alignment of CLEP exams for equivalency requirements for credit.

WKU Best Practices at a Glance

- Continual outreach to high school counselors, students, and parents
- Focused communication to internal stakeholders
- Flexible testing center hours to accommodate students' schedules
- Responsive and broad credit granting policies

Executive Summary

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For more information, visit clep.collegeboard.org.