

The most interesting thing that I got from the conference was the emphasis on noncredit instruction. In particular I found the concept of a "high school" within a college interesting. As we get increasing numbers of students who are ill prepared for college level work, it makes sense to me to offer instruction off the college "ladder" of courses. For instance, I think that most English teachers would agree that students who test into English 110A are probably not going to be ready for freshman composition in two years, if ever. Yet that is what our sequence of courses suggests will happen. If remedial courses could be offered in a non-credit mode, it would allow the student to repeat work as necessary without the stress of grades or remediation limits.

One argument against this, which I have at times offered, is that this type of instruction should take place at adult education institutions, not colleges. But the reality seems to be that adult education is dead, or at least moribund, and like it or not, these students are coming to the colleges.

There are some challenges to offering non-credit instruction. The main one being that, although the rate of compensation has been increased, it is still less than what is given for credit compensation. Also, 95% of noncredit faculty are adjunct and the minimum requirement for teaching is the BA, not the MA which could create some concerns for college faculty.

In short, I find the idea of keeping students who are not ready for college out of college classes until they are ready for them makes sense, and I'd like to see the district consider the possibility. Also, I think the senate at some point in time should address the question of to what degree we should be a "junior college" (i.e. the provider of freshman and sophomore level transfer courses) and to what degree should we be a "community college" which offers service to the community regardless of the level of academic preparation.