Launching Dr. Risa E. Dickson
Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy
University of Hawai‘i System
“55% of Hawai‘i’s working age adults to have a 2- or 4-year college degree by the year 2025.”

Source: UH Institutional Research and Analysis Office, NCHEMS, & U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2006 to 2012
Strategies to Promote Completion
2010 CCA Completion Academy

• **Reduce time and accelerate success**
  → Take 15 credits a semester

• Transform remediation

• Restructure delivery

• Shift to performance funding
In 2010, UH created the Hawaiʻi Graduation Initiative (HGI), a systemwide effort to promote student success and reduce time to degree.

A key strategy was the *15 to Finish* campaign:

- Uses data and media campaigns to share key messages to students, parents, and the community.
- Forms the basis for policy and procedure changes to remove barriers to taking 15.
- Brings focus to campus initiatives around student success.
- Shifting the norm from 12 to 15 credits.
Assessing Where We Were

- What was our current situation?
- Would taking 15 credits a semester make a difference in retention and graduation rates?
- Would it work for all students, including at risk populations?
- Could we shift to a culture where taking 15 credits was the norm, not 12?
- What were barriers to taking 15 credits and could we remove them?
Does Taking 15 Make a Difference?

Understanding the Situation

- Studied fall 2009-11 first-time freshmen cohorts
  - 55-78% took 12 to 14 credits, including students at the community colleges
  - Students who completed at least 30 credit hours in their 1st academic year had better grades, retention, and graduation rates
Can 15 Credits Work for All Students? An In Depth Analysis

Analyzed various measures of success of first-time freshmen taking <15 credits and ≥15 credits per semester by:

• Academic preparation – Created a score of 1 to 4 (with 4 being the highest) based on SAT/ACT, HS GPA/rank, etc.

• Demographics (gender, ethnicity, Pell)
Measures of Academic Success

• 1st semester grade point average
• 1st semester GPA “B” or better
• Credit completion $\geq 80\%$
• Course withdrawals $\geq 20\%$
• Persistence
Academic Success by Preparation Score and Number of Credits Taken, 4-Year Campuses

First-time Freshmen, Fall Semester 2009–11

% GPA Initial Semester ≥ “B”

Number of students taking <15 credits = 4,777
Number of students taking ≥15 credits = 2,698
Academic Success by Preparation Score and Number of Credits Taken, Community Colleges

First-time Freshmen, Fall Semester 2009–11

% GPA Initial Semester ≥ “B”

Number of students taking <15 credits = 17,960
Number of students taking ≥15 credits = 16,629

Academic Preparation Score

<15 Credits ≥15 Credits

4.0 3.5 3.0 2.5 2.0 1.5 1.0
Results of Our Analysis

Students who took at least 15 credits tended to be better prepared and to have greater academic success.

Most importantly, at all but the lowest levels of academic preparation, students who took at least 15 credits generally had greater academic success.

This held for Pell and URM students as well.
Shifting the Culture and Removing Barriers
Campaign

- **Goals**
  - Change the culture to full-time equals 15, not 12 credits
  - Promote on-time graduation (2 and 4 years)

- **Key Audiences**
  - First-time freshmen (student orientation)
  - Faculty and advisors (campus meetings)
  - Students, parents, community (media campaign)
Communications Strategy

• Developed a branding theme

• Created tailored messages for different audiences

• Developed a media strategy using video, web, TV, radio, print collateral, and print advertising ($112k in Year 1)

• Enlisted partners to help spread the word
  - Secured campus commitments
  - Shared with K-12 partners
Policy Changes and Other Strategies
UH System

- Adjusted class standing based on 15 credit increments (e.g., changed sophomore designation from 25 to 30 credits)
- Required 30 credits a year for renewal of state scholarship
- Piloted reducing summer tuition to encourage completion of 30 credits a year
- Partnered with UH bookstores on annual drawings for freshmen who completed 30 or more credits in their first year to win a semester of free textbooks
- Surveyed students enrolled in 12-14 credits to determine why they didn’t enroll in 15 or more credits
- Encouraged campuses to create 2- and 4-year academic maps for each program
Policy Changes and Other Strategies
UH System

- Included graduation rates as a performance funding measure
- Changed UH’s registration login page to promote 15 to Finish
Policy Changes and Other Strategies
UH Mānoa

- Provided incoming freshmen with schedules based on 15 credits; students needed to opt-out to take 12 credits
- Reduced the number of required credits from 124 to 120 for graduation
- Required mandatory academic advising for all freshmen
- Required students to declare their majors by the end of the 2nd semester of their sophomore year
- Provided semester-by-semester academic maps
- Funded summer scholarships to incentivize freshmen to complete 30 credits their first year
Barriers and Challenges We Encountered

- Not enough or not the right course offerings
- Not fully implemented semester by semester plan for on-time graduation
- Not everyone was convinced
  - Advisor / faculty pushback on 15 to Finish message
  - Student concerns
- More expensive for community college students who pay for each credit taken
Barriers and Challenges We Encountered

• 4-year graduation rates at Mānoa improved dramatically but 6-year rates and retention rates improved less

• Enrollment and tuition revenue declined
  - Need for changing enrollment management practices
Addressing Internal Audiences’ Concerns

• Incorporated 15 to Finish message at new student orientations

• Reinforced message at meetings and workshops for advisors and other stakeholders

• Kept the data front and center through presentations and handouts
### % ≥15 Credits Attempted
#### First-Time Freshmen Fall Cohorts

#### UH System by Unit

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- 2009-11
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016

Fall Semester
Fall Retention
First-Time Freshmen Cohort, Fall 2012

UH Mānoa – Total Cohort

Total  ≥15 Credits  <15 Credits
Fall 2  Fall 3  Fall 4  Fall 2  Fall 3  Fall 4  Fall 2  Fall 3  Fall 4
77%  69%  63%  82%  74%  69%  72%  62%  57%
% of Students Who Earned 30 Credits / Year
First-Time Freshmen Cohorts

UH Mānoa – Total

2009-11 Cohorts: 37% Year 1, 43% Year 2, 44% Year 3, 51% Year 4
2012 Cohort: 46% Year 1, 51% Year 2, 54% Year 3, 50% Year 4
2013 Cohort: 50% Year 1, 50% Year 2, 54% Year 3, 55% Year 4
2014 Cohort: 52% Year 1, 56% Year 2, 54% Year 3, 55% Year 4
2015 Cohort: 54% Year 1
4-Year Graduation Rates of First-Time Freshmen Cohorts, 2009-12
Graduation Years 2013-16
UH Mānoa – Total Cohorts

- Total
  - 2009: 21%
  - 2010: 25%
  - 2011: 28%
  - 2012: 31%

- ≥15 Credits
  - 2009: 28%
  - 2010: 34%
  - 2011: 37%
  - 2012: 38%

- <15 Credits
  - 2009: 17%
  - 2010: 19%
  - 2011: 22%
  - 2012: 23%
Where We Are Going:
15 to Finish v2.0, “The Right 15”

- Focus on linking registration, advising, and academic maps using UH’s homegrown STAR Guided Pathway System (GPS)
  - Set 15 credits as the default course load
  - Identify students’ straightest trajectory to completion based on their course-taking decisions, i.e., recalculate a student’s academic pathway in real time
  - Enable advisors to immediately reach out to students who are not “on track” or taking courses that do not count toward their degree requirements
  - Ensure future course availability
Summary

• Continue 15 to Finish with the focus on the “right 15”
• Continue to develop policies and procedures to further facilitate students’ paths to completion
• Work with campuses to further institutionalize student success strategies
• Focus on populations other than first-time freshmen
Questions?

risad@hawaii.edu

15tofinish.com/