

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- ◆ 1915 – Founded, New Rochelle, NY
- ◆ 1959 – Expanded and moved to White Plains
- ◆ 1973 – Accredited and firmly established as The Westchester Business Institute (WBI)
- ◆ 1975 – NYS Board of Regents authorized WBI to offer the Associate in Occupational Studies (AOS) Degree
- ◆ 1997 – NYS Board of Regents authorized WBI to offer the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) Degree
- ◆ 2003 – The College was granted regional accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- ◆ 2003 – NYS Education Department approved name change from WBI to The College of Westchester (CW)
- ◆ 2008 – NYS Board of Regents authorized CW to offer the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) Degree
- ◆ 2011 – College approved by the NYS Education Department and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to offer degrees in an online format



THE COLLEGE
OF WESTCHESTER

Sharing Best Practices at The College of Westchester to Retain and Graduate Low Income Students

1/28/14 p. 1

Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Hinojosa and distinguished Members of the Committee, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about The College of Westchester. You will hear from my testimony that I am extremely proud to represent The College of Westchester because I am particularly proud of how we serve our students and our community.

The College of Westchester will celebrate its 100th anniversary of service to students and the community in 2015. We are a privately owned, single campus college in White Plains, Westchester County NY. Our steady enrollment is approximately 1000 students. Our curriculum includes campus based and fully online programs in business and healthcare administration, digital media and technology, awarding associate and baccalaureate degrees. Our programs are consistently honed under the watchful eye of our College Advisory Counsel, made up of employers who understand and communicate



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trends within their industries. All programs are offered due to the employability in each field.

We maintain healthy, vibrant relationships with the local and regional corporate community, and have developed a professional network of over 300 businesses that regularly hire our graduates. We sit on the boards of local businesses, community and education associations. The New York State Board of Regents and Middle States Commission on Higher Education oversee our excellence.

The College of Westchester is a proprietary college; we pay local property taxes and corporate income taxes in New York State and federally. Our graduates secure good jobs and become contributing taxpayers. Most stay in New York State. The vast majority of our employees also live in NY.

Let me paint a quick picture of our student. We serve both traditional students who have just graduated from HS, and non-traditional students, adults who may be coming back to college after many years. One thing they have in common is that they come from families with need and they face unique challenges. 75% of our students are PELL eligible and the overwhelming majority of our students receive assistance from New York's tuition assistance program, commonly referred to as TAP. As you know, PELL and TAP are awarded to students – not institutions, and we are proud that they select CW. Our students come from our community and they continue to reside at their home. CW does not offer dormitories. Our students work an average of 10 to 30 hours per week in addition to going to college.

CW does not have an open enrollment policy. We personally interview each prospective student, review their transcripts and accept only qualified students who we feel can succeed.

CW has created many unique ways to help our students reach the finish line, graduate and succeed. Here are a couple tried and true methods we employ.

- All incoming students who test into non-credit Basics of Math are provided with, and are actively encouraged to participate in, a cost-free *CW Summer Bridge* program to help improve their math skills and retest into a higher-level, credit-bearing math class. 122 students took advantage of this during the 2013 summer with 117 successfully being placed in a higher level, credit-bearing course.

Another version of this program is called *CW Boot Camp*, offered at intervals convenient to working people. Both help keep GPA's high and instill the resilient mindset necessary to succeed.

- We are currently developing a Basics of Math MOOC (Massively Open Online Course) that will be available asynchronously to a larger group outside of our regular student population.
- *CW's Success Coaching Program* assigns each student with a Success Coach and tracks the students coursework, strengths, stressors and professional growth opportunities by utilizing CW's Campus Toolkit. This comprehensive evaluation

provides students with the academic, financial and employment counseling necessary to succeed.

- CW employs a comprehensive analysis and support structure. Faculty and college staff constantly evaluate students to identify those at risk by monitoring classwork product, student interaction, attendance, resilience and persistence. Students are identified and directed to The Learning Center for tutoring needs and counselors are engaged and available to properly advise students and help them meet challenges outside the classroom.
- Adult students, in particular, may have completed coursework or obtained life experience that is rich and should be considered as credits earned. CW has been further developing our program of *prior learning assessment*. Students may now enter CW with credits granted towards their degree from recognition of prior learning earned at another college, through standardized exams (CLEP, Uexcel, ECE and International Baccalaureate exams), high school and BOCES articulations, for holding technology certifications such as A+, CCNA, Adobe or Microsoft Office Specialist, for military experience, or through a portfolio evaluation of life and career experiences.
- CW Students do not study abroad; however, we recently began partnering with State University of New York's Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Initiative. This program utilizes in class video conferencing with students in Panama and broadens each student's horizon by collaborating on academic projects. Soon we will be collaborating with a group from Coventry England.

- CW is working with the NewsActivist, a writing-based global partnership that provides classes and students with opportunities for text-based international collaborations, which gives students opportunity to improve their writing skills.
- In 2012, CW was selected to partner with Carnegie Mellon University and a small group of other colleges across the country in Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative (CMU-OLI) to improve the success of college students in certain "gateway courses", identified as those most challenging to entering students. 5 CW Faculty and over 100 CW students participated in the project, all having agreed to do so as volunteer research subjects. Researchers from Carnegie Mellon University have evaluated the results provided by CW and the other participating colleges.
- CW students have been accepted into the prestigious University of Pittsburgh's i3 Scholars Program, two years in a row.
- CW works daily to reduce costs while maintaining quality; thus, CW has become proactive in reducing textbook costs. Twenty-two courses replaced commercial textbooks with a combination of Open Source print materials, e-books, and other open online resources. An evaluation of the effectiveness of these alternative resources is currently underway and we believe our quality has not slipped at all.

In my written comments, I proffer several areas I would respectfully like the Committee to consider during deliberations of the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Specifically, year round PELL and accurate data reporting and analysis through IPEDs reporting. We feel that students are penalized for attending college year round. We

find that students want to complete their studies within a timeframe that will allow them to seek and find employment more swiftly than the average college student. While other students are taking the summer off, our students are attending class and working toward their degree completion.

IPEDES report on first time full time students. We feel that all students should be tracked for persistence and graduation, not just first time students. More and more colleges enroll adult students who wish to complete college, or students who have decided to transfer from one college to another. None of these students are currently captured in IPEDES data. In addition, CW and other colleges that offer courses year round report three semesters of persistence and graduation rates, as versus two semesters at traditional colleges. Both of these inconsistencies create data that is not comparable or easily understandable to the consumer, potential students and their families.

We strongly believe that Congress, and the Department of Education, should judge institutions on the basis of how well they serve students and not on some other political consideration such as their tax status. As you know, the President has proposed a college ratings system that, if enacted, should be applied to all institutions of higher education. However, just as the White House is seeking feedback from higher education leaders on the proposed report card, the Department of Education is dictating a punitive new regulation called Gainful Employment which will result in the closure of programs that don't meet an arbitrary metric that measures student debt versus

income. There is already an excellent metric in place that clearly measures student success and ability to repay. This is the default rate measurement that colleges must report on. This measurement has been in place for many years.

If enacted as proposed, the Gainful Employment regulation would introduce a complicated regulatory scheme that is hard to understand and does not accomplish its goals.

- It would close degree programs at proprietary colleges while leaving untouched degree programs at other colleges that have much worse outcomes.
- Programs that graduate no students will be deemed as providing “gainful employment” due to the complications in the regulation.
- Programs where there is little or no evidence that graduates are employed, will be deemed as providing “gainful employment” due to certain biases in the regulation.

There is a lot of work to be done to assure low income students are served well and are not left with overwhelming debt. The proposed Gainful Employment regulation is a step in the wrong direction.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you this morning and I welcome any questions you may have.