

GCC enrollment down again in 2020 with Guided Pathways on the way

Michael Manny, Online Editor

GLENDALE, Ariz. – Student enrollment decline at community colleges is a nation-wide trend, and that holds true at Glendale Community College this spring, too.

According to enrollment data from the Maricopa County Community College District Office of Institutional Effectiveness, GCC’s enrollment through Jan. 17, 2020 sits at 14,814 students, down 1.1 percent. This follows a 7.6 percent enrollment decrease in the first week of spring 2019 compared to spring 2018.

The question of lower enrollment is a complicated one, with no easy answer.

“It’s definitely multi-faceted, I think the economy is a factor, so whether or not persons (sic) decide to seek employment or go to college when there’s less employment opportunities, oftentimes community college enrollment grows,” Dean of Enrollment Management Yolanda Espinoza said.

GCC Planning and Research Analyst Raechel Megahan also stated that the health of economy is one of biggest trends in community college enrollment.

“When the economy is down people need jobs really quick, so they rushed to the community college for training and joined the workforce quickly,” Megahan said. “When the economy is up, they don’t need jobs as quickly.”

But other, more localized factors could also contribute to an enrollment decline.

“We also have the declining birthrate in the nation, so there’s more colleges competing for the traditional 18-24 year old student,” Espinoza said. “We also have an increase in the number of options for students, both private, non-profit public.”

Enrollment is calculated in a few different ways. Headcount is the number of unique individuals taking classes at the college. Enrollments are the total number of classes enrolled in by each student and are duplicated for each class taken.

This spring, GCC also had a 3.7 percent drop in another metric, known as Full-Time Student Equivalent or, FTSE. FTSE helps MCCCCD determine funding for the colleges and is calculated by dividing the total number of credit hours a student is taking by a full time schedule of 15 credits.



MARICOPA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

WEEKLY ENROLLMENT TREND - SPRING
Headcount and Basic Term FTSE
Summary for Week 2 for the Spring 2020 Term
Includes Spring 2020 registrations through Sat, January 25, 2020

	SPRING HEADCOUNT			SPRING BASIC TERM FTSE		
	Prior Year Headcount	Current Year Headcount	% Change in Headcount	Prior Year Term FTSE	Current Year Term FTSE	% Change in Term FTSE
CGCC	13,158	13,383	1.7%	6,581	6,553	-0.4%
EMCC	8,752	8,838	1.0%	4,673	4,633	-0.9%
GCC	15,073	14,885	-1.2%	8,236	7,917	-3.9%
GWCC	3,957	4,256	7.6%	1,843	1,932	4.8%
MCC	17,659	17,892	1.3%	9,154	9,013	-1.5%
PC	9,650	9,807	1.6%	4,896	4,918	0.4%
PVCC	7,012	6,910	-1.5%	3,504	3,431	-2.1%
SCC	7,251	6,981	-3.7%	3,530	3,252	-7.9%
SMCC	3,419	3,625	6.0%	1,815	1,876	3.4%
MCCCCD Unduplicated without Rio Salado	82,878	83,238	0.4%	44,231	43,524	-1.6%
RSC	13,472	13,559	0.6%	1,835	2,012	9.7%
MCCCCD Unduplicated - All Colleges	94,765	95,163	0.4%	46,066	45,536	-1.2%

This report includes Basic Term FTSE only, which is calculated by dividing total credit hours by a 'normal' full-time semester class load of 15 credit hours. Basic FTSE includes only those credit hours from classes that are scheduled to be in session on the 45th Day of Fall or Spring terms; it excludes credit from Short-term (ST) classes that are not in session on the 45th Day, Open Entry/Open Exit (OE/OE) classes, and Summer term classes.

Data compiled by MCCCCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness.
Data sourced from the Institutional Research Information System (IRIS): WK_Students (2020-01-26) MINT (2020-01-26)
The Spring 2020 term began on Saturday, January 11, 2020

MCCCCD Office of Institutional effectiveness

Headcount, the number of unique students taking classes at GCC, is currently down 1.2 percent compared to the third week of the spring 2019 semester. Through January 17, 2020, it was down 1.1 percent.

GCC president Dr. Teresa Leyba Ruiz said that if there is a budget decline at the end of the year, a total academic year FTSE calculation is done, and if that number is lower than what it was the prior year, the college must give funds back to the district. If GCC has grown, the district gives more to the college.

"GCC enrollment has been in a steady decline the past eight years, and so for the past eight years, we have had to find ways in our GCC budget to pay back, to the district office

Because we are serving less students," Leyba Ruiz said. "Now for our sister colleges who are growing, then they would see a budget bump."

MCCCD funding comes from three main areas: tuition, Maricopa County property taxes and grants. MCCCD, as well as other Arizona community college districts such as Coconino, Cochise and Pima, no longer receive State funding as of fiscal year 2015-16.

Though enrollment may have decreased at GCC, state universities are not seeing much of the same trends during the current period of economic growth.

According to trend data from Arizona State University Institutional Analysis, ASU had a combined 74,878 students at their five metropolitan campuses fall 2019, up from 72,709 the previous . This includes 2,687 transfer students from MCCCD colleges. While that is a substantial total, only the Tempe campus saw huge individual growth, with much coming from Scottsdale's Skysong business complex.

In Tucson, the University of Arizona is growing gradually, as well. According to Arizona University Analytics and Institutional Research, UArizona had 45,918 total enrollment in fall 2019, up from 45,217 in fall 2018. Nine percent of transfers to UArizona came from an MCCCD college.

Northern Arizona University had an enrollment of 30,736 students as of last fall, a decrease from 31,073 in fall 2018.

To attempt to assist students, administration and staff from across the college took part in the "My 25 campaign." With this campaign, volunteers each took 25 students from a list of students that were enrolled in the fall but not the spring, and called to ask if they needed any assistance navigating questions like re-enrolling after being dropped for nonpayment, and the financial aid process.

With lower enrollment being a perplexing issue, school officials discussed potential solutions to improve students' experience, including switching to eight-week sessions, paid internship opportunities and helping students that are able to become full-time do so, with scholarships.

ASU West, a few miles away from GCC offers two different eight week sessions along with a 16 week semester.

Vice President of Student Affairs Monica Castaneda said that GCC students that transfer to nearby ASU West are able to become full time through scholarships.

"One of the reasons they can do that is because the ASU Foundation has a very strong fundraising component that finds money for scholarships, so students don't have to work as much," Castaneda said. "One strategy is working with the Maricopa Foundation to secure more dollars, more scholarship dollars for our students."

This fall, the most substantial changes coming to enrollment at GCC is the initial implementation of Guided Pathways to Success.

"Oftentimes, we find when our students graduate, they're graduating with way more than 60 credit hours needed for an associate degree," Leyba Ruiz said. "Part of that problem is they're swirling, not sure what I want to study, maybe business, maybe engineering, maybe nursing, and that swirl is costing students time and money."

With Guided Pathways, new students will have the opportunity to choose from nine fields of interest; Applied Technology, Behavioral Science and Human Services, Business, Entrepreneurism and Management, Computer Information Technology, Culture and Society, Education, Health Sciences, STEM and Visual and Performing Arts. Within each field, are several different degree paths, with a clear pathway to a degree or certificate.

With each field of interest, there will also be designated advisers, admissions and records and financial aid staff for students to go to for questions. By this fall, previously enrolled and new students will be in a field of interest.

"You're here for a reason, and it's our job to help you find that reason and help you stick with it, so that you can come out on the other side with a degree or certificate," Leyba Ruiz said.