

Student Enrollment Down at GCC in 2019

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By Michael Manny February 1, 2019

GLENDALE, Ariz. – A strong economy, competition from other state universities, and a new tuition policy has led to a drop in enrollment at Glendale Community College this spring, according to school officials.

With the economy booming, potential students are choosing to enter a strong job market, rather than enroll in college. Historically, when the economy is strong, enrollment at two-year institutions dips. When it enters a recession, enrollment surges.

“It’s normal for community colleges to have a drop in enrollment when the economy gets better or the unemployment rate goes down,” GCC Dean of Enrollment Services Yolanda Espinoza said, “We predicted, or the college predicted a 4.5 percent enrollment drop, and we actually had 7 percent.”

In 2018, the unemployment rate in Arizona was 4.9 percent according to talkpoverty.org. However, the percentage of Arizona children under 18 in poverty was 20.4 percent. 12.8 percent of working age men and 15.6 percent of women were in poverty.

In addition, GCC is facing huge competition from the in-state universities: Particularly, valley based Arizona State University, Grand Canyon University, and Arizona Christian University. This is through a combination of recruitment, resources and marketing.

Marco A. Vasquez is a bursar in business services for GCC, and partly attributes the drop to the universities’ competition. He acknowledges that there can’t be a singular reason for it though.

“Our competition is very fierce. We have a couple new universities that have come up. Arizona Christian, you know they’re just down the street we’ve got competition there. We’ve got GCU that has a large, large marketing budget which doesn’t compare to Maricopa,” he said.

As of fall 2018, 109,000 students are enrolled at ASU including 83,544 undergraduates, according to a report from azcentral.com. GCU has grown rapidly over the past several years, and has surpassed 20,500 on campus students as of fall 2018 according to the school’s official website.

“We have stiff competition in the west valley here and many of them are for profit institutions who have a lot more resources than we do to advertise on TV to you know, appeal to the consumer,” Espinoza said.

Finally, the new tuition policy implemented by the Maricopa County Community College District last October caused confusion that led to some students being dropped.

The policy states that students must apply for financial aid, sign up for a monthly payment plan, or pay the full balance in person or online. If none of these options are followed on the same day of registration, students are dropped from their classes.

GCC student Nathan Moya wasn’t aware of the new policy when he registered.

“Last semester I enrolled in class and I could wait until before school started to save up a bit more money,” he said, “I didn’t know about it before I was dropped, I had to change my classes because of it.”

MCCCD did notify students of the policy change through text, email, and the My Maricopa student center.

Students can sign up for a payment plan at the enrollment center building or online in the My Maricopa student center. Plans require only a \$15 down payment and \$20 enrollment fee at the beginning and then shift to monthly payments. In future semesters, if students are having difficulty, an arrangement can be worked out in person or by calling the cashiers office at 623-845-3589.