

The Cornerstone Program
At Central Washington University
2001 - Fall 2004

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Background

The Cornerstone Program started at Central Washington University in the fall of 2001. This program is offered through the Office of Continuing Education and is allowing students throughout the state of Washington an opportunity to participate in rigorous college courses while still in high school. These courses are taught by qualified, approved Central Washington lecturers for credit on high school campuses. Success in these courses allow students opportunities to transition successfully from high school to college, to reduce the cost of college, to strengthen their chances of being accepted to the college of their choice and to progress toward a college degree.

The following report is gleaned from surveys of Cornerstone instructors and former students, a Cornerstone Program Evaluation report, Cornerstone Year-End Reports, and CWU Institutional Research and Student Affairs data.

2004 Survey Results - Students

Attached is a survey sent to former Cornerstone students one year after high school graduation. Thirty-five former Cornerstone students responded to the survey. The following is a sample of comments concerning their experiences:

“Cornerstone really prepared me for the expectations of college. Because I took the Cornerstone English courses (101, 102, and 105), I was completely confident in writing papers and reading analytically at the college level as an entering college freshman! It put me so far ahead of my peers, and it showed in my grades. Being a part of the Cornerstone program was one of the best decisions I have ever made!”
– East Valley High School

“I was very impressed with the way the Cornerstone Program was run at my high school. My teacher did an excellent job and it was extremely challenging.”
– Quincy High School

“Cornerstone is an excellent opportunity for students to experience a taste of the rigor of college and at the same time remain connected with their high school.”
– Cashmere High School

“This program is well worth the time and money. Can’t say it any simpler than that.”
– Ocasta High School

Examining former students' sense of Cornerstone's success in providing benefits they considered important, the following results were found:

- **To be able to stay on my high school campus while taking college classes**
94% stated that Cornerstone succeeded in providing this benefit
- **To take on a challenge which would keep high school interesting for me**
86% stated that Cornerstone succeeded in providing this benefit
- **To become more familiar with college-level academic expectations**
80% stated that Cornerstone succeeded in providing this benefit
- **To strengthen my college application for admissions**
80% stated that Cornerstone succeeded in providing this benefit
- **To save money**
79% stated that Cornerstone succeeded in providing this benefit
- **To complete requirements which would allow me to broaden my college studies and to advance in my major**
77% stated that Cornerstone succeeded in providing this benefit

Examining the success of Cornerstone in supporting the transition of students from high school to college, the following results were found:

- 100% of responding former Cornerstone students are currently enrolled in college: 81% are attending a 4-year college or university, while 19% are attending a community college.
- 91% believe their high school instructors were qualified to teach the Cornerstone courses they taught.
- 91% state that because of their Cornerstone courses, they were more prepared than, or equally as prepared as their peers in college classes: 56% feel they were more prepared than their peers; 35% thought they were equally as prepared as their peers.
- 75% feel more was expected of them in their Cornerstone courses than in their other high school courses.

2004 Survey Results – Instructors

After the 2004 annual instructor training session, all of the Math and English Cornerstone instructors in attendance were asked to complete the attached instructor survey. Eighteen of twenty instructors in attendance responded.

Asked “What is the single greatest impact Cornerstone has had on you, your students or you school?” some of the instructors responded:

“Students from families with no post-high-school experience learn that they can do college level work! They believe in the possibility.”

“Cornerstone has given our students the opportunity to do university-level work while still in high school. Students appreciate the course more after they complete their first year of

college. I grade them harder and work them harder than many of their college faculty, so their level of confidence is high if they have succeeded in my class.”

“My students are prepared for college and are experiencing success – it eliminates some of that transition failure that freshmen in college experience.”

[Cornerstone is] “raising the level of expectation of our best students and showing them that they can rise to the occasion.”

“It helps keep students on our campus rather than losing them to the community college. They get a challenging college course while still in high school and earn college credit.”

Additional responses provided by Cornerstone instructors:

Benefits to high school students

As a result of taking Cornerstone courses:

- 94% of the instructors strongly agree that their students have a more realistic expectation of college work
- 94% of the instructors strongly agree that their students gained in-depth knowledge in the subject area.
- 89% of the instructors strongly agree that their students developed a better understanding of academic skills.

Benefits to instructors

As a result of teaching Cornerstone courses:

- 89% of the instructors strongly agree that they found their job more satisfying.
- 89% of the instructors strongly agree that they had been exposed to new ideas and developments in their discipline.
- 89% of the instructors strongly agree that they had been able to establish higher standards for work with students.
- 89% of the instructors strongly agree that they found greater satisfaction and fulfillment in their work.

Additionally, as a result of Cornerstone’s presence in their school, 83% of the instructors strongly agreed that this presence has encouraged high school students to take challenging courses, going beyond the requirements for graduation.

Program Growth

As the following table illustrates, the Cornerstone program has grown steadily since the program was initiated in 2001. Fall enrollment for 2004 has increased an additional 44% over fall 2003 enrollment. If this growth rate holds, enrollment for the academic 2004-'05 academic year should exceed 1,100.

Cornerstone Enrollment 2001 – Fall 2004							
Program Year	Number of CWU Acad. Depts.	Number of CWU Courses Approved to Offer	Number of High Schools	Number of Teachers Approved as Lecturers	Number of Classes Offered	Total Enrollment	Number of Individual Students Served
2001-2002	4	6	14	17	26	214	171
2002-2003	8	15	16	37	44	524	353
2003-2004	9	18	19	45	68	777	389
Fall 2004*	6*	10*	18*	49*	31*	374*	346*

*partial year

Academic Performance – Former Cornerstone VS Non-Cornerstone Students

The following table provides a comparison of incoming freshmen who have taken Cornerstone classes versus traditional incoming freshmen students. The data clearly indicate that Cornerstone students are coming to CWU with significantly greater GPA's and Admissions Index scores. Further, former Cornerstone students continue to perform at a relatively high level academically in their first quarter at CWU.

Central Washington University INCOMING CWU FRESHMEN COMPARISON				
Incoming CWU Freshmen	New Students Enrolled		High School GPA: Grade Point Average	
	Cornerstone	Non-Cornerstone	Cornerstone	Non-Cornerstone
Fall 2001	0	1214	N/A	3.12
Fall 2002	10	1292	3.73	3.15
Fall 2003	17	1265	3.50	3.14
Fall 2004	10	1352	3.68	3.16
	AI: Admissions Index		1st Quarter CWU GPA	
Fall 2001	N/A	45.23	N/A	2.70
Fall 2002	73.00	46.86	3.36	2.83
Fall 2003	63.35	45.80	3.21	2.74
Fall 2004	71.30	45.44	N/A	N/A

Cornerstone Students at CWU

As of fall 2004, 63 former Cornerstone students have matriculated at CWU. Many of the students attend a community college for a period of time and transfer to CWU while some come directly to CWU after graduating from high school. While former students are very positive about their experience with Cornerstone courses, the number of students attending Central Washington University after this experience is not as high as anticipated.

Where Do We Go From Here

The majority of the responses on both instructor and former student surveys were extremely positive. However, several items can be identified that need to be addressed.

1. Some instructors expressed that there is a need for more content during the annual training session. The structure of the annual training needs to be reviewed.
2. Some instructors feel they would like more interaction and networking with other Cornerstone Instructors. A plan to bring these instructors together throughout the year may provide opportunities for networking.
3. As noted above, the number of students that attend CWU is somewhat disappointing. A plan between CE and Admissions to better connect CWU with students and their families and recruit these students to Central is needed.
4. Follow up on other concerns expressed in the student survey, for example assisting students with the transfer of credits to new colleges.

In Conclusion

The Central Washington University Cornerstone Program is successfully providing a concurrent enrollment program in the high schools we are serving. The program is growing each year and the outlook for continuing growth is positive. Improvements are planned in several areas as well as active, ongoing program evaluation. These steps should ensure a quality program that aids in the transition from high school to college, results in a closer working relationship between CWU and state high schools and draws more academically gifted students to CWU.