

## Hudson County Community College Town Hall Meeting

Monday October, 27, 2025

### Dr. Reber Remarks on Shortened Academic Terms

- Two weeks ago, many HCCC faculty and staff attended a professional development opportunity regarding full seven-week program offerings.
- For those who did not attend, the interactive session was led by Achieving the Dream colleagues and generated important and constructive discussion among HCCC family members.
- I am very sorry that I was out of town and unable to attend the event, but I have heard positive comments about its value in continuing our discussion of the efficacy of including some full seven-week program offerings in our growing array of programs and services that are helping improve student retention and completion.
- I thank Vice President Dr. Darryl Jones for coordinating the session and helping lead the discussion.
- Since I wasn't able to join the discussion, allow me to comment briefly about full seven-week program offerings.
- There is clear and compelling evidence that short-term programs ***that can be completed in their entirety*** in a shortened, seven-week format are very strongly correlated with student persistence and completion.
- Why?
- Because students can focus on just one or two courses at a time and complete those courses in half the time of a traditional course.
- Students are doing the same amount of work, and faculty are teaching the same content, but just focused on one or two courses at a time.
- As we all are aware, time is a great enemy for most of our students.
- Life often gets in the way of completion for our students.
- With the shorter-term format, students are more likely to complete a given course without life getting in the way, and they can see completion of each course more clearly at the end of the tunnel, which helps further incentivize their continued enrollment and retention in the next and subsequent courses.
- This only works, however, if a student can complete an ***entire program*** using this format.

- Combining courses using short- and traditional timeframes can actually **exacerbate** completion as short-term courses are more intensive and therefore should not be combined with other courses and formats that create an excessive load for students rather than a manageable one.
- Since we offer many short-term courses but not full program offerings, I worry that this happens for some of our students now.
- So, the goal is to make it possible for some students to complete entire programs in a shortened format, including all of their general education and support courses in addition to their major courses.
- ***Let me clarify that we have never intended to convert the entire college curriculum to seven-week courses!***
- We **ARE** interested in developing some full program offerings in this format with faculty who are open to and supportive of teaching this model.
- And clearly some disciplines lend themselves to short-term formats better than others.
- Student success requires flexibility to offer a range of models and formats that best address students' needs.
- And this is entirely about student success.
- Our focus in all of this work is using best practices supported by empirical research to remove barriers to student persistence and completion.
- We are always looking for faculty and staff partners who want to try approaches and models that are successful across the nation.
- A great example of this is our work together to create the Hudson Scholars Faculty Mentor model over the past several years that has been successful and appreciated by students and participating faculty.
- I'd now like to invite Dr. Jones to comment further on this work, followed by Dr. Heather DeVries to discuss the recent visit of ATD Coaches Dr. Mary Fifield and Dr. Rene Garcia, and an update on our student success work and our continuing engagement with *Achieving the Dream*.