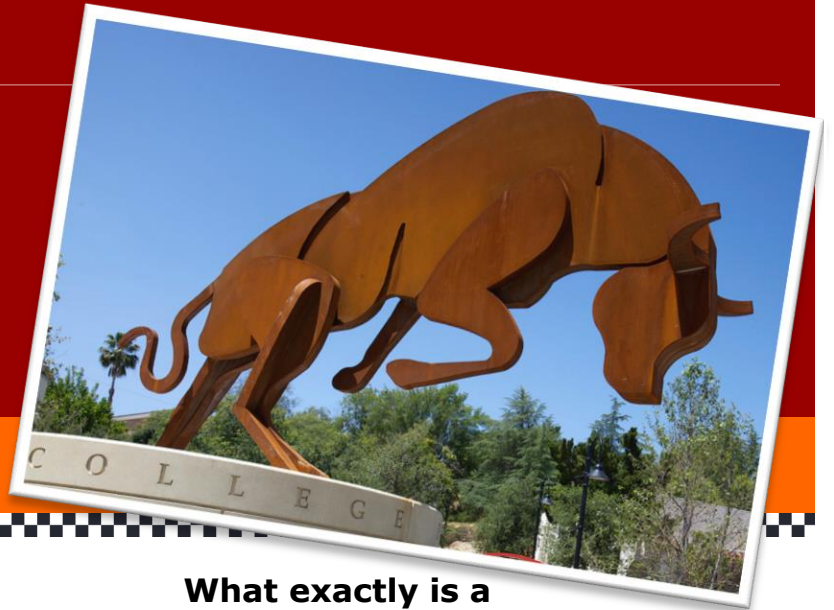


# First Monday Report

## Focus on Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES)



Issue 35, November 6, 2017

### Upcoming Events:

- Nov 8 Resolving Conflict in the Workplace  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
CSB
- Nov 10 Veterans Day (Observed)  
Campus Closed
- Nov 15 Teaching & Supporting Men of Color in the Community College: a Visit with Dr. Frank Harris, III  
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Building 600
- Nov 21 Holiday Stress Hardy  
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Pierce Online Conference Room
- Nov 23-24 Thanksgiving  
Campus Closed

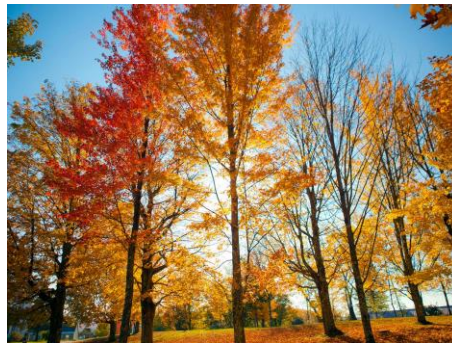
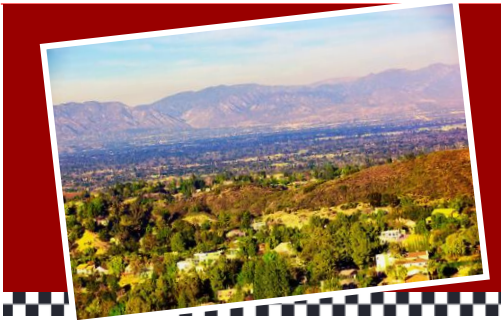
### What exactly is a "Full Time Equivalent Student" (FTES)?

By Sheri L. Berger and Kathleen F. Burke

System-wide, California community college (CCC) unrestricted or general fund revenue is generated through apportionment collected from the students enrolled in courses, both credit and noncredit. In all but one case, this revenue is based on the number of hours—not units—in which a student enrolls. Individual student enrollments are combined to create a Full-time Equivalent Student (FTES). Colleges are paid for each FTES generated through student enrollments based on the reimbursement or apportionment rate in effect for any particular year. While the reimbursement rate can grow or decline annually based on the state's fiscal health, which leads to budget year proposals, the methodology for calculating FTES has not

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## FTES

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changed since community colleges separated from their former ties to local K-12 districts in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since the manner in which we generate revenue affects all of us, the focus of this article is to explore how we generate FTES and some of the factors that influence that process.

### What is a Full-time Equivalent Student (FTES)?

Every hour, whether credit or noncredit, in which students are enrolled is added up to create FTES. The total number of student hourly enrollments required to create **a single FTES is 525 student contact hours.**

Three-hour lecture classes typically equate to three hours of unit credit, and a student enrolled in such courses during a traditional fall or spring, known as the "primary terms," generates three hours per week toward the 525 total—or about 54 hours. If that same student is also enrolled in a nine-hour class that is worth four to five units of credit, that enrollment generates nine hours per week toward the 525 hours—or about 162 hours.

The fact that we are reimbursed for hours and not units (except in one instance) is particularly important in generating noncredit apportionment. By design, noncredit instruction does not award credit; and, if FTES were based on units, we would not receive any apportionment for the hours that we offer in noncredit. The key to generating 525 hours is the number of hours in which a student is enrolled on a weekly, daily or per-attendance basis.

If one student in a three-hour class contributes about 54 hours to the 525 total, it takes about 10 students in that same class, each contributing their 54 hours, to make just one FTES ( $54 \times 10 = 540$  hours). A rule of thumb that is easy to remember is that 10 students in a three-hour class is one FTES; thus, a three-hour class with 30 students produces about three FTES; 40 students generates about four FTES; and 45 students contributes about four and a half FTES. While the actual calculation may be slightly higher or lower, on average this rule of thumb works to balance out many factors.

### Why is one FTES equivalent to 525 hours?

The term "full-time student" is used as an important benchmark or requirement for a number of programs in higher education. For example, many of us are familiar with the need for students receiving financial aid to be a "full-time" student enrolled in a minimum of 12 hours/units. Similarly, to be eligible to participate in an athletic team, student-athletes must be enrolled in 12 units. This same 12-unit load is also part of the requirements for international students. As a result many of us believe that a "full-time student" is one who is enrolled in 12 units. As discussed above, an individual student enrolled in one three-hour/unit class contributes about 54 hours to the 525 total. This same student enrolled in four three-hour/unit classes generates about 216 hours to the 525 total. While she or he is considered "full-time" to receive financial aid, to participate in athletics, or as an international student, he or she only contributes about 41

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## One FTES = 525 hours

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percent of the hours needed to be a full-time equivalent student for apportionment purposes.

Another prevailing idea is a full-time student is one who is enrolled in 15 hours and/or units per semester. This notion likely comes from the fact that in order to complete a 60-unit associate's degree in two years a student would have to be enrolled in 15 hours or units in each of the four primary (fall and spring) terms over a two year period (60 units/4 semesters=15 units). Using our example from above, if the student is enrolled in one additional three-hour/unit class, she or he will contribute about 270 hours to the 525 hour total. Even at 15 hours per semester our student is not contributing all of the hours needed for even one full-time equivalent student.

How many hours does our individual student need to enroll in to make our magic 525 hours? He or she will finally generate a little more than one FTES once she or he completes 30 hours of instruction in an academic year or 15 hours in each of the primary terms. The 525-hour formula is a holdover from the days when community colleges were part of K-14 districts. One FTES is created when a student is enrolled in 15 hours of instruction over a 35-week academic year (15 hours x 35 weeks = 525).

### Are all forms of 525 hours/FTES equal?

Once we arrive at a total of 525 hours, or one FTES, do we receive the maximum allowable return on our investment? We could wish for it to be that simple; however, the method used above for all of our examples was based on students enrolled only in the fall and spring semesters. Full-time equivalent students enrolled in semester-length courses during the two primary terms generate what is called "Weekly Student Contact Hours" (WSCH [pronounced "wish"]). Any class that is offered for less than the full 16.5 weeks of a fall or spring term is considered short-term, including both winter and summer session's classes. Short-term FTES is calculated on a daily basis rather than a weekly basis and is called "Daily Student Contact Hours" (DSCH [pronounced "dish"]). While these are the two most frequently used accounting methods, there are three other methodologies applied to the reporting of our 525 hours.

Through the Student Attendance Accounting Manual (2001 Edition [SAAM]), community college districts are directed to apply one of five "accounting methods" in calculating FTES. The five accounting methods are:

- Weekly Student Contact Hours (WSCH)—Applies to full-term fall and spring credit classes that are regularly scheduled. Regularly scheduled means the classes meet for the same number of hours each week the class is scheduled.
- Daily Student Contact Hours (DSCH)—Applies to short-term credit classes that are regularly scheduled.
- Independent Study and Independent Study (Alt)
  - Applies to all directed study and online/hybrid full-term and short-term credit classes.
  - Independent Study (Alt) is used for hybrid classes where the lecture portion is online but the laboratory portion is face-to-face. This is a specific exception to the calculation for lecture/lab classes.
- Work Experience—Applies to cooperative education classes, which are not currently offered at Pierce College.
- Positive Attendance (PA)—Applies to all short-term irregularly scheduled credit classes, open-entry/open-exit classes, and all noncredit classes.

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## The FTES annualizer

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In each accounting method, one FTES is equal to 525 hours of instruction, which is referred to as the FTES annualizer and is specifically required in statute. As indicated in the SAAM, "the FTES annualizer is a function of the length of the academic year and the proportion of that year completed during each reporting period in terms of scheduled faculty contact hours of instruction and examination" (p. 3.10).

The accounting method applied depends on the type of course scheduled and its duration. The difference in each accounting method is how the hours of instruction are calculated. The chart below illustrates these calculations for each accounting method:

Accounting Method	Calculation
WSCH	$FTES = \frac{(census^* enrollment) \times (apportionment\ hours\ per\ week^{**}) \times 16.5}{525}$
DSCH	$FTES = \frac{(census\ enrollment) \times (apportionment\ hours\ per\ day^{***}) \times (\#\ of\ actual\ meeting\ days)}{525}$
Indep. Study	$FTES = \frac{(census\ enrollment) \times (units) \times 16.5}{525}$
Indep. Study (alt)	$FTES = \frac{(census\ enrollment) \times (weekly\ standard\ hours) \times 16.5}{525}$
Work Exp.	$FTES = \frac{(census\ enrollment) \times (units) \times 16.5}{525}$
PA	$FTES = \frac{(actual\ hours\ of\ attendance)}{525}$

*Note: 16.5 represents the "term length multiplier" (TLM) since we are on a compressed calendar and includes the flex hour obligation for faculty.*

*\*Census enrollment is taken after exclusions for no shows even if exclusions are submitted after the census date.*

*\*\*Apportionment hours per week are calculated as follows:  $\frac{(weekly\ standard\ hours) \times 16}{18}$*

*\*\*\*Apportionment hours per day are calculated using the methodology indicated on page 3.8 of the SAAM.*

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## Finding a balance

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Using the calculation formulas above, we can see how the ways in which a class is scheduled impacts the FTES generated. The examples below are based on 40 students in a three-hour class.

WSCH FTES = 4.24

DSCH FTES = 4.11

Online FTES = 3.77 (Independent Study Method)

PAFTES = 3.45 (Maximum [assumes all student show up for every class meeting])

WSCH is the accounting method that generates the most FTES followed by DSCH, then Independent Study and Work Experience, and finally, PA. Short-term classes generate less FTES than semester-length classes because in the WSCH accounting method non-class meeting days due to holidays are not subtracted from the total. In DSCH, holidays are removed from the total number of reported hours. Comparing the calculations of WSCH and Independent Study, the difference in FTES comes from using *units* rather than "apportionment hours per week." The Independent Study accounting method is the one exception to the use of hours of instruction rather than units of credit awarded. Since the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) is on a compressed calendar, the apportionment hours per week for a three-hour class are 3.375. This little difference adds up over the large number of classes we offer.

In addition to the ways in which we schedule course sections impacting the FTES we generate, another component of enrollment management is class size. Class limits are based on many factors including facility capacity, contractual limitations, and external regulations. In planning to achieve the FTES target for the year, the College uses data to balance the course offerings for student demand with the need to maintain efficient overall average class sizes.

At the District level, the effective average class size is determined as a ratio of how many FTES are generated in a subject to how many Full-time Equivalent Faculty (FTEF) are paid. So, the WSCH class from the example above with 40 students enrolled at census has an effective average class size of 42.4, and the online class has an effective average class size of 37.7. Based on the College's Plan for Enrollment Management (PEM), the College has a goal for an overall effective average class size of 39 or higher. It is important to note that programs with lower effective average class sizes are supported by programs with higher effective average class sizes. The College continues to strive to find a balance within offerings of courses and programs while meeting overall efficiencies.

### **How do all of these calculations contribute to the college/district "base?"**

A college's or district's "base" FTES is calculated annually and is set by the number of full-time equivalent students for which the college/district received funding or apportionment. Annually, this number becomes the floor or minimum amount of FTES the college/district is expected to generate.

Currently, a district that falls below its base has three years to return to its prior base FTES. During the first fiscal year in which a district does not meet its base, the district goes into "stabilization" and is funded at the previous year's base FTES. If the district is not able to

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## FTES Annual Calculations

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return to or "restore" its FTES to the prior base during the stabilization year, in the following fiscal year, the district is funded at the lower FTES base generated during the stabilization year.

The district continues to have three years to "restore" FTES to its prior base even if the district receives less funding. If the district is not able to generate FTES to its prior base after the three-year period, the district is permanently "rebased" to the lower FTES and becomes eligible to generate growth should it be funded in the budget.

\*At [ccco.edu](http://ccco.edu), open the *System Operations* tab, select *Divisions* from the drop down menu and on the right drop down menu select *Finance and Facilities*, then *Attendance Accounting/Residency*. The *Student Attendance Accounting Manual (2001 Edition [SAAM])* is provided in chapters with each separately linked. Chapter 3 focuses specifically on Attendance Accounting.

Reference:

[\*Student Attendance Accounting Manual \(2001 Edition\)\*](#)

### FTES

- ▶ Full Time Equivalent Student
- ▶ 525 Total Contact Hours
- ▶ 15 Weekly Contact Hours (WSCH) for 35 Weeks
- ▶ Basis for state funding