



EL CAMINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

16007 Crenshaw Boulevard, Torrance, California 90506-0001

Telephone (310) 532-3670 or 1-866-ELCAMINO

www.elcamino.edu

October 20, 2014

Board of Trustees
El Camino College

Dear Members of the Board:

Welcome to the half-way mark of the fall semester. Faculty and students are fully engaged in active learning for student success. While it has been a while since our last Board meeting, campus activities are proceeding splendidly.

The October Board agenda is quite extensive yet relatively routine and predictable. Mr. Jose Anaya will make a presentation on our Community Advancement – Economic and Workforce Development Act. The consent agenda items include the following:

1. Academic Affairs, which presents routine actions, is highlighted by the Curriculum Committee's endorsement of a number of changes.
2. Student and Community Advancement is initiated by items A and B, which are required Institutional Effectiveness Outcomes in our Strategic Plans for 2015-2020, as explained on Attachment A. Naturally the goals differ between the two locations. The remaining SCA items focus on the first reading of two Board policies and administrative procedures.
3. Administrative Services recommendations are routine items.
4. Measure E presents a number of contracts as we complete our Shop Building replacement project and our Industry and Technology project. Please note Attachment B, Ms. Higdon's communication on Measure E items I, L and N.
5. Human Resources presents routine employment and personnel changes and position classification specifications. Please note that several management retirements/departures are included in the agenda with recruitments currently underway. Dr. Francisco Arce and Ms. Hortense Cooper have submitted their intentions to retire. Dr. Regina Smith has resigned to accept a promotional opportunity at Los Angeles City College. We initiated the recruitment process for Dr. Arce and Ms. Cooper to avoid gaps in leadership in the same manner as the recruitment for the Executive Director of the Foundation.

6. Superintendent/President and Board of Trustees initiates the Board of Trustees' evaluation and goal-setting process. Item B presents the goals that were established in 2014 along with a self-evaluation questionnaire to be completed by each Board member expressing your opinion of all Board members' activities for each one of these areas. Your combined evaluations will be reported back to you and the public at the November Board, at which time you will review the evaluations and develop new goals for approval at the December meeting.

The non-consent agenda includes a Resolution Approving Assignment of Delinquent Tax Receivables to the California Statewide Delinquent Tax Finance Authority, Attachment C.

Closed session includes a conference with legal counsel on existing litigation, direction to the District's Chief Negotiator for the Police Officers' Association negotiation, and two public employee actions.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the agenda, please feel free to contact Ms. Cindy Constantino or me prior to the Board meeting so we can provide informed responses.

Thanks to all of you for volunteering to meet with the accreditation review team. Unfortunately, the team was only able to meet with Board President Beverly and Student Trustee Garcia but they appreciated your willingness to dedicate time to such an important activity. As you are aware, the team visit was completed last week and your packet includes Attachment D, unofficial notes of the report back to our college community. The official report from the visitation team will be reviewed within a month and all documents will be sent to the Accrediting Commission for its determination on status to be announced at the end of January 2015.

The Vice Presidents are reviewing data produced by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning on all of the learning communities supported by El Camino College. In addition to this data, they will review the data set for the Student Equity Plan which identifies student cohorts by gender, ethnicity, disability, veteran, and foster youth status. The plan will address gaps in achievement and outcomes for each of these groups. The Student Equity Plan and additional funding the college will receive to implement the plan will allow us to expand the success of the learning communities models such as FYE, Puente, and Project Success. This plan will be brought before the Board in December 2014.

Letter to the Board – Page 3
October 20, 2014

As you may be aware, a student has made threats throughout the campus to a named employee and others. Please see Chief Trevis' communication, Attachment E.

The supplemental reading list includes the following:

1. Correspondence from Dr. Francisco Arce regarding Trustee Numark Referrals
2. Correspondence from Dr. Francisco Arce regarding Chris Mello Guitar and Jazz Festival
3. Correspondence from Dr. Jeanie Nishime regarding International Program
4. Correspondence from Ms. Ann Garten regarding International Student Marketing/Advertising
5. Correspondence from Dr. Jeanie Nishime regarding Withdrawal from William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program
6. Letter to Mr. Jan Vogel regarding South Bay Workforce Investment Board
7. Article from The Chronicle of Higher Education: "Seeking Help at a Campus Counseling Center? You May Have to Wait"
8. Article from Inside Higher Education: "Reprieve on Default Rates"

Again, thank you for your dedication and support to student success at El Camino College. I look forward to seeing you on Monday in the Board Room at 4:00 p.m.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Fallo
Superintendent/President



EL CAMINO COLLEGE

Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement

Jeanie Nishime – Vice President

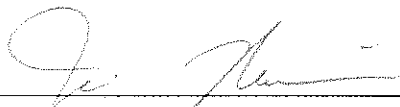
October 15, 2014

TO: President Thomas M. Fallo

SUBJECT: Institutional Effectiveness Outcomes

In March 2014, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) required all colleges to report their institutional-set standards for student performance. These standards represented the floor for student performance below which we would not fall. As a good practice, ACCJC also recommends that colleges establish aspirational goals for various outcome measures.

Ten institutional effectiveness outcomes were established for both the College and the Center. These outcome measures were deliberated in depth throughout the consultation process and are presented to the Board for adoption. These outcomes will be monitored annually with the goal of reaching the stated outcomes by 2019-20.



Jeanie M. Nishime

JMN/mre

**EL CAMINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

16007 Crenshaw Boulevard Torrance, California 90506-0001
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October 14, 2014

To: President Thomas Fallo

From: Jo Ann Higdon, M.P.A.

Subject: Measure E Items I, L & N

Item I, page E9 - Upon investigation of actual existing conditions (which were not anticipated or identified prior to bid) revisions to details were suggested by National Roofing Consultants (NRC) to prevent future possible roof leaks. These additional changes required NRC to revisit the project beyond the original contractual number of visits.

Item L, page E10 - This is Change Order number one and final. This is a relatively small project that required changes due to coordination with the existing building and utilities and current code requirements. These items have been negotiated over time and the final resolution was recently reached.

Item N, page E12 - The Industry and Technology Building is a \$25 million renovation of 108,000 square foot existing 50-year-old building. This change order includes \$69,990 in credits for less expensive materials and deletions of equipment deemed not required and does not compromise the integrity of the newly remodeled building. Items 7, 14 and 15 are related to: existing conditions for new roof, the interface with the existing campus Energy Management System, and previously existing plans that did not correctly identify the height of the existing window openings. The remaining items are: code requirement items, coordination items with the existing conditions of the building, additional lighting in hallways and stairwells, and coordination with existing underground utilities. The original contractor requested amount for these was \$136,000 including credits as opposed to the final change order amount of only \$41,543.

Jo Ann Higdon, M.P.A.
Vice President Administrative Services



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October 14, 2014

To: President Thomas Fallo
From: Jo Ann Higdon, M.P.A.
Subject: Delinquent Tax Receivable

For tax collection purposes, the College belongs to a joint powers authority which factors (sells) past-due property tax accounts receivable. The previous board action was on June 21, 2010 and covered the period through June 30, 2013. The College is now required to reapprove this activity. Thus, the resolution is presented as a non-consent agenda item B for your action.

Jo Ann Higdon, M.P.A.
Vice President Administrative Services

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE****Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement****Jeanie Nishime – Vice President**

October 15, 2014

TO: President Thomas M. Fallo

SUBJECT: Accreditation

The accreditation team completed their validation of El Camino College's Self - Evaluation report. The thirteen-member team was led by Dr. Linda Lacy, Superintendent/President of Cerritos College. The team gave the college seven commendations, four recommendations regarding the standards and ten recommendations to improve institutional effectiveness.

The information provided by the team is unofficial and merely a brief summary of their findings during the visit. We expect to receive the draft report from Dr. Lacy in a month's time and will have approximately ten days to correct any errors of fact. The Commission will meet in January 2015 to review the visiting team report and make their official findings. The Superintendent/ President will be informed of El Camino College's accreditation status via letter sometime following that meeting.

Commendations:

1. Efforts made to ensure continuity of educational services to the Compton community;
2. A vibrant student life on campus;
3. A remarkable student ambassador program and police cadet program;
4. Comprehensive and meaningful work on SLO development and assessment at program, course and institutional levels;
5. A viable distance education environment;
6. Exceptional collaboration between library and instructional faculty relative to competency skills in English courses.
7. The Compton Center was commended for the exceptional leadership and extra effort put forth by faculty, staff and administrators in addressing institutional challenges and student learning.



EL CAMINO COLLEGE

Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement

Jeanie Nishime – Vice President

Recommendations:

1. Complete the integrated planning cycle stressing the need for purposeful dialogue. Clarify how priorities are met and communicate these to stakeholders.
2. ECC Compton Center implement its fiscal management plan to ensure financial integrity and dispensing of timely information of finances.
3. Implement planning, governance and decision-making outlined in the Making Decisions document and existing Board policy that will link to resources and data and evaluate for effectiveness.
4. Recommend implementing a process for reviewing Board policies and procedures and identify timelines, and Board of Trustees review as necessary.

Two policies and procedures in the agenda are related to three of the four recommendations. Board Policy/Administrative Procedure 3250 *Institutional Planning* addresses Recommendations 1 and 3. Board Policy/Administrative Procedure 2410 *Board Policies and Administrative Procedures* addresses Recommendation 4. All of these policies and procedures have gone through extensive consultation and will help us resolve the recommendations set forth by the visiting team.

Recommendations for Institutional Improvement:

1. In order to increase efficiency, complete development and implementation of measurable objectives and strategic initiatives, i.e. outcomes and student achievement.
2. Address student access in service area and student population with focus on CEC which ensures institution recruit and enroll diverse students at serving institution. Ensure management goals are achieved.
3. Stronger alignment with outreach plan and enrollment management plan. Equal access for all.
4. Address essential support services...health services developed at CEC, and expand wireless – more online support services should be offered at Compton.
5. Develop and implement a plan to digitize student records currently stored in hard copies.
6. Improve coordination of student tutorial and learning programs.
7. Center to implement Compton Facility Master Plan for improving aged and non-functional buildings and provide physical environment conducive to teaching and learning.

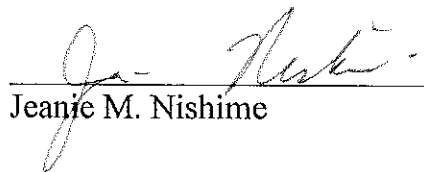


EL CAMINO COLLEGE

Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement

Jeanie Nishime – Vice President

8. Clarify roles and responsibility of two IT committees – Tech Committee and Academic Technology Committee.
9. Develop procedures to train, implement to strengthen accounting and fiscal procedures as indicated in audit findings.
10. Board of Trustees complete current policy for selection of President/ Superintendent.



Jeanie M. Nishime

JMN/mre




El Camino College Police Department

16007 Crenshaw Blvd., • Torrance, CA 90506-0001 • Phone (310) 660-3100 • Fax (310) 660-3930

October 14, 2014

To: President Thomas Fallo

From: Chief Michael Trevis 

Subject: Student Threat

On Wednesday, October 1, 2014, campus police swiftly and effectively handled a situation involving a male student who was making criminal threats toward college employees. After receiving a call about the situation, El Camino College Police immediately took the student into custody in the City of Hawthorne.

Following his arrest, the individual was served with a temporary restraining order (TRO). The TRO prohibits the student from coming within 100 yards of El Camino College. Campus police will immediately arrest this individual should he violate the restraining order. At this time, the individual is still in police custody.



EL CAMINO COLLEGE
Vice President – Academic Affairs
October 15, 2014

TO: President Thomas Fallo
FROM: Francisco Arce *FMA*
SUBJECT: Trustee Numark Referrals

In response to a request from Trustee Numark regarding follow up with four community organizations that are interested partnering with El Camino College to expand services, the following individuals were contacted and the outcomes of those conversations are listed below:

Joan Davidson – former Palos Verdes School Board Trustee

I contacted Joan Davidson to discuss her interest in the development of supplemental college courses for Palos Verdes High School students. We had an interesting conversation about the impact of the common core on high school students and the difficulty students and parents are having with the changes in expectations required by the new curriculum. Joan is requesting that El Camino College offer selected college-level courses in the Palos Verdes High School District to supplement the Humanities high school curriculum. As follow up, I will contact the high school officials at South High School and Palos Verdes High School to better understand the concerns around common core. It is important to note that El Camino College is unable to offer courses in Palos Verdes unless Harbor College agrees to allow it, as PVHS is in their service area.

Colleen Mock – representatives of the Harbor Regional Center

Dipte Patel, Director of the Special Resources Center, contacted Colleen Mock to discuss the potential for partnerships. Ms. Mock and Dr. Patel have collaborated in the past to write a grant proposal for a College to Career program. They did not get the grant, but they have reconnected to identify gaps in supports and services in our community for persons with intellectual disabilities and developmental delays.

In coordination with David Gonzalez, Director of the Center for Applied Competitive Technologies, Dipte Patel is exploring curriculum and employment training opportunities offered through other community college programs. The goal is to connect local agencies to build a sustainable program bridging support for a smooth and dynamic transition among and between K-12, community college and employment. This includes working with the Harbor Regional Center and their vendors such as Social Vocational Services.

Dave Oster -- member and representative of PeopleFirst

Dipte Patel contacted Dave Oster, a member of PeopleFirst, an organization that serves developmentally disabled students and adults, to discuss the SRC's services for students with developmental disabilities and current efforts to establish a program for improved transition and employment outcomes. Mr. Oster agreed to serve as a contributor to the current efforts in producing an animated video regarding self-advocacy. Dr. Patel provided him with program information for his clients' future career planning.

Linda Luck -- representative of Soldiers Project

The Veterans Office was asked to contact Linda Luck to discuss the development of partnerships with El Camino College. The Soliders Project provides a variety of services for Veterans and it is possible the College may include this agency as a resource for clients of the El Camino College Veterans Center.

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE**

Vice President – Academic Affairs

October 15, 2014

TO: President Fallo

FROM: Francisco Arce *Fma*

SUBJECT: Chris Mello Guitar and Jazz Festival

During Chris Mello's five year tenure at El Camino College he became a vibrant faculty member leading the guitar and jazz program. He brought new energy and talent to the music program. Students sought out his classes, resulting in the revival of the jazz band and the guitar program. Chris was also interested in building connections for students to learn more about the world of jazz. It was this drive that led him to arrange the first El Camino College Guitar Festival in 2013. The event was highly successful due in large measure to Chris' connection with the Music Program at USC. In collaboration with his USC colleagues a successful Guitar Festival was held.

Regrettably, Chris passed away in July 2014 and it was recommended by Trustee Beverly, the Fine Arts Division and the Music Program Faculty to continue Chris' legacy with the 2nd annual Guitar Festival to be held in 2015. The Dean of Fine Arts, Connie Fitzsimons, met with the family and they approved the concept of the festival and memorial for Chris. They appreciate that Chris will be memorialized for his contributions to the El Camino College Music Program.

The festival is scheduled for Friday, April 10 at 7:00 p.m. in the Marsee Auditorium.

I will work with the Foundation and the Fine Arts Department to develop a budget for El Camino College to sponsor this exciting festival in honor of Chris Mello's contributions to music and particularly to jazz and guitar.

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE****Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement****Jeanie Nishime – Vice President**

October 15, 2014

TO: President Thomas M. Fallo

SUBJECT International Program

We have completed the selection process for the manager of the El Camino Language Program (ECLA) and the International Student Program (ISP). ECLA is our not-for-credit language academy from which we transferred 63 students into our credit program last year. ISP is our credit program primarily for F-1 visa students. We are recommending Lindsey Ludwig for the position. Mrs. Ludwig currently serves as Business Manager/Program Advisor at USC. There she is responsible for fiscal activity; serves as liaison between Student Affairs departments, student groups, and the international office; advises F-1 students; and serves as the lead for cultural exchange events, International Education Week, and international orientation.

Her selection will allow us to focus services and recruitment and marketing efforts in order to expand both programs to reach our goal of 100 ECLA students and 1,000 ISP students per term. We currently serve approximately 55 ECLA and 700 ISP students per term.


Jeanie M. Nishime

JMN/mre

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www.elcamino.edu**M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M**

Date: October 10, 2014

To: President Fallo

From: Ann M. Garten
Director, Community Relations

Re: International Student Marketing/Advertising

Per your request, I have begun identifying marketing and advertising activities necessary to increase El Camino College's international students' enrollment. The first step is to develop a marketing and advertising plan. This plan will be a subset of the overall college Communications and Marketing Plan, and will include the following elements: a situation analysis statement; the desired goals and measurable objectives; strategic messaging; specific target markets; and an outline of the elements to implement the plan and achieve our goals.

To-date we have begun a review of the International Students webpage, which will lead to a restructuring of the webpage. We will also add a "widget" that will allow individuals to translate the text on the webpage to many different languages. We will be adding an International Students section to the college's "e-brochure"; and working with the college's Language Academy to develop a more natural transition for students in that program to enrollment at the college.

Once the Marketing and Advertising Plan is completed, I will forward that to you. We will be targeting implementation of the plan to impact fall 2015 enrollment.

**EL CAMINO COLLEGE****Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement****Jeanie Nishime – Vice President**

September 23, 2014

TO: President Thomas M. Fallo

SUBJECT: Withdrawal from William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program

In April 2013, a recommendation was made by the Dean of Enrollment Services that El Camino College withdraw its voluntary participation from the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program which is administered by the U.S. Department of Education effective the 2013-2014 Award Year.

The justification for this recommendation was twofold. First, the number of student loans being issued had decreased significantly for students enrolled at both El Camino College and Compton Center from Fiscal Year 2010 thru Fiscal Year 2013 – 40% and 80% respectively. Second, the Cohort Default Rate (CDR) grew from 5.5% in Fiscal Year 2004 to 25.6% in Fiscal Year 2010 and all indications were that the CDR was only going to continue to climb. The CDR rates for both locations were combined effective the 2006-2007 Award Year due to the partnership.

According to U.S. Department of Education regulations, if the annual CDR exceeds 30% in any one year or exceeds 25% for a three-year period, the El Camino Community College District would risk the ability to participate in the Title IV federal student aid program which includes the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Work Study, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.

Less than 1% of all financial aid recipients at either location received a federal direct loan during the 2012-2013 Award Year. Yet, their impact by not repaying, not entering into a repayment plan, and/or not deferring repayment on their student loans would jeopardize the federal student aid of approximately 30% of all students enrolled at both El Camino College and Compton Center. To my knowledge there has not been a noticeable impact since withdrawing from the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program.



EL CAMINO COLLEGE

Office of the Vice President-Student & Community Advancement

Jeanie Nishime – Vice President

At the conclusion of the 2012-2013 Award Year, the outstanding student loan balances were:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Loans</u>	<u>Borrowers</u>	<u>Outstanding Balance</u>
In-School	401	165	\$1,361,019.68
Grace	69	25	\$224,781.00
Current	117	49	\$395,678.93
Delinquent	140	67	\$456,988.79
Deferment	75	26	\$278,509.81
Forbearance	50	20	\$187,001.41
Transfer	28	16	\$3,357.02
Grand Total	880	368	\$2,907,336.64



Jeanie M. Nishime
Vice President

JMN/mre

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October 1, 2014

Jan Vogel, Executive Director
South Bay Workforce Investment Board
11539 Hawthorne Blvd., 5th Floor
Hawthorne, CA 90250

Dear Mr. Vogel:

El Camino College is in agreement with the request made by the Cities of Torrance and Lomita to transfer to the South Bay Workforce Investment Area under the oversight of the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB). This transfer would join these cities with the nine South Bay cities currently being served by the SBWIB and strengthen the viability of the South Bay region.

This alliance especially makes sense when you consider that the South Bay is a well-defined region of Los Angeles County. The SBWIB participates with key regional organizations such as the South Bay Cities Council of Governments and the South Bay Area Chambers of Commerce to meet the economic and workforce development needs of the region. El Camino College is pleased to be a partner with all of these organizations by providing courses and programs to meet the workforce needs of our South Bay communities.

The SBWIB has worked for many years to provide a well-educated and highly competitive workforce to strengthen South Bay businesses and the quality of life for residents. They are strongly aligned with El Camino in our efforts to implement sector strategies to meet the skill demands of the growth industries in the region, especially in advanced manufacturing. El Camino College has had representation on the SBWIB Board for many years and we are keenly aware of the value of working collectively to support the businesses and residents of this region.

Therefore, on behalf of El Camino College, I am happy to express my support for the Local Area Modification Application that will be submitted by the SBWIB to the California Workforce Investment Board to unite Torrance and Lomita with the nine other South Bay cities in the South Bay Workforce Investment Area.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Fallo
Superintendent/President

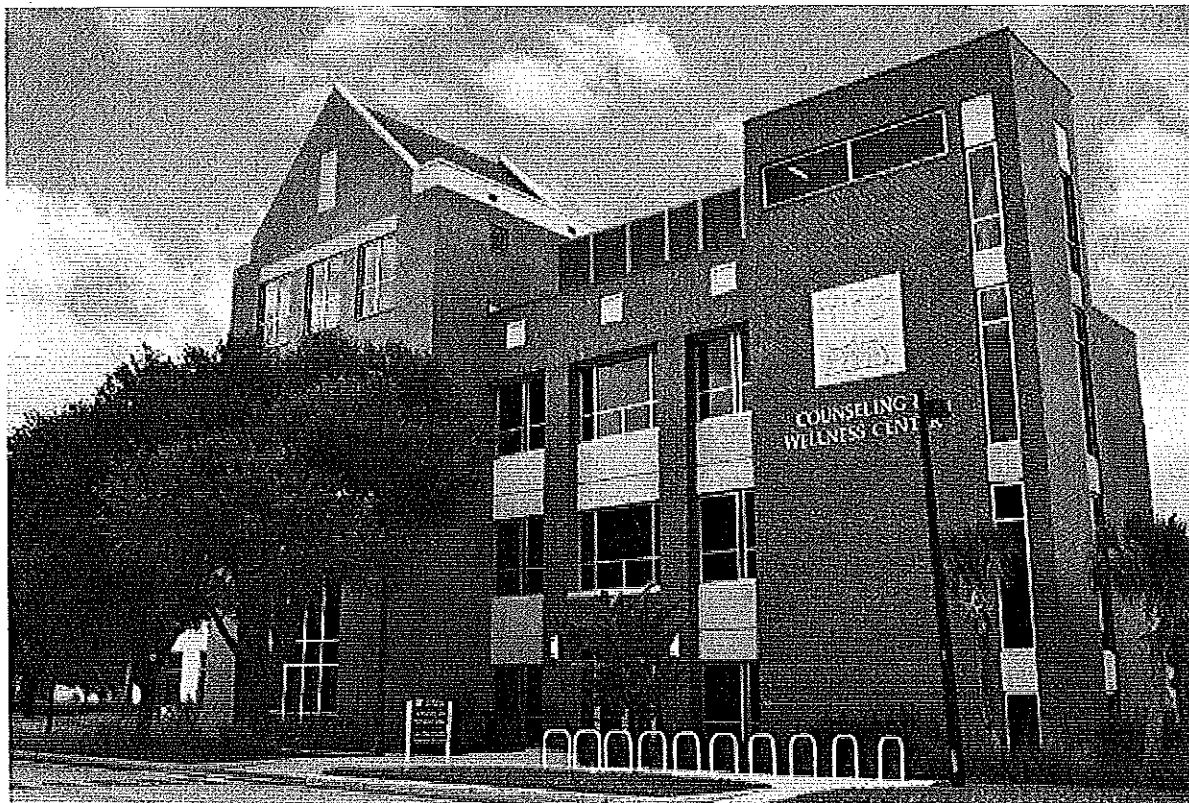
THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

October 10, 2014

STUDENTS

Seeking Help at a Campus Counseling Center? You May Have to Wait

By Jared Misner OCTOBER 10, 2014



At the U. of Florida's Counseling and Wellness Center, students seeking help may not get an initial triage appointment the same day, and an appointment with a counselor could take longer. Florida's center is not alone. In a recent survey, a third of college counseling centers reported having a wait list at some point during the 2012-13 academic year.

Margie L. Madison likes to think of herself as one of the lucky ones. Things could have been much worse, much more destructive.

She knew what it was like to be gripped by anxiety. But she was lucky, she says, because she also knew she needed a counselor. Psychotherapy had worked before, in high school.

So Ms. Madison, then a 22-year-old accounting major at the University of Florida, went to the university's counseling center with a simple question: Will somebody please talk to me?

The university's response: Take a number.

Ms. Madison's experience of being frustrated by a campus counseling center's wait list is nothing unique. A third of colleges that responded to a recent survey (http://files.cmcglobal.com/AUCCCD_Monograph_Public_2013.pdf) by the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors reported having a wait list at some point during the 2012-13 academic year.

And the lists are getting longer: The same study found that, from 2010 to 2012, the maximum number of students on counseling centers' wait lists at universities with more than 25,000 students nearly doubled, from 35 to 62. During peak times—October to November—students can wait up to four weeks at some institutions.

Many counseling centers have reported increased budgets and hiring efforts, but more students are showing up, and counseling-center officials say their staffs struggle to meet the booming demand. Some of them have also raised concerns that long wait times can only compound students' anxieties, making their troubles worse.

Ms. Madison made an initial triage appointment—a common type of visit many college counseling centers use to sort students with mental-health emergencies from those who can wait. But the university put her case in the latter category and told her, she says, to come back in two weeks.

So she waited, anxiety still roaring. She tried to eat right. She exercised. She took deep breaths.

During that waiting period, she says, "if I was somebody who was living on my own for first the time and had no idea how to handle it, that would have been a lot worse and a lot more destructive."

When Ms. Madison returned after two weeks, a counselor handed her a piece of paper with the names of several mental-health providers in the community. The center's wait list was still long, the counselor said, and she had health insurance the providers accepted. Or she could wait two more weeks for a full appointment at the college.

"I just wish that, before waiting those two weeks, they had been upfront with me," Ms. Madison says. "I could have been treated during the two weeks if I had just Googled those doctors in the beginning."

Rising Demand

Shari A. Robinson, interim director of Florida's counseling center, says the center's wait list has peaked earlier in each of the last three years. This year, Ms. Robinson says, the center had to start a wait list in late September, and it's so busy that it's "unusual" for the center to have a same-day triage appointment available.

Instead, she says, students who come to the counseling center or call for an appointment usually wait three to five days even for their initial triage appointment. The counseling center does offer two hours each day for walk-in triage appointments, but that doesn't guarantee a student will be seen that day. Then, during peak times, a student may wait for another two or three weeks for an appointment.

"Things start to feel uncomfortable for both the students and the staff when the students have to wait for more than two weeks," Ms. Robinson says.

Ben D. Locke, clinical director at Pennsylvania State University's counseling center, shares Ms. Robinson's worries. If a student waits until November to seek help, he says, continuing treatment probably isn't possible.

"The problem is that a lot of times when students seek out help in distress, they often need problem-solving help right now. And if that help isn't available right now, there could be serious consequences," Mr. Locke says. "The students I worry about with the delays in care are the ones who the day they reach out is the day they need treatment. And they need a very direct and immediate support to succeed that semester. And if they don't succeed that semester, they fail out of their major, they fail out of school. That lack of ability to intervene means they have lasting consequences."

Combating Long Waits

Many colleges have tried a variety of tactics in recent years to reduce wait times, but delays can persist.

Group-therapy sessions, for instance, allow the counseling centers to devote a block of time to multiple students rather than just one.

Florida offers a biofeedback lab, which includes six computer stations that teach students how to lessen anxiety on their own, using stress-reducing exercises.

Additionally, many counseling centers set limits on how many sessions students can book—usually seven to 10—to free up time for new patients.

And one major public university has eliminated wait lists altogether by focusing on staying flexible to meet students' needs.

"We either say, 'We can see you today, but we might have a little more time to see you tomorrow. What do you think about that?'" says Aaron D. Krasnow, Arizona State University's director of counseling services. "It's the opposite of a wait time. You tell me how much of a service you want."

If a student's counselor isn't available, Mr. Krasnow says, the student can choose to see someone different. If all of the staff members working in triage appointments are busy with patients and the counseling center needs someone else, the staff looks to see who can be made available. And, he says, perhaps there's an immediate outside referral the counseling center can offer a student.

"There's never a conversation saying, 'I want to see you, but I can't,'" Mr. Krasnow says. "We're here for them. They're not here to wait around for us."

But to many, that's easier said than done. Kirk Dougher, Florida Atlantic University's executive director of health and wellness, says he has hired staff members in 36 out of the 38 months he's been in charge. But, he says, he's "hired himself out of space," and the wait at the Boca Raton institution at peak time is still two and a half weeks.

Mr. Krasnow, for his part, recognizes the challenges of counseling centers that are understaffed, but says that hiring alone will not clear the backlog.

"Everyone is under-resourced because the need is so great. But no one is going to staff their way out of this problem. There is no staff number that will make this go away," Mr. Krasnow says. "We own that reality. It's a perspective that we're not going to put our eggs in that staff-number basket."

Mr. Krasnow still worries about how long wait times hurt students.

"You don't have to be a psychologist to know the potential impact of being told, 'We would, but we can't,'" he says. "Not only are they not getting help, but now they're losing time and they're losing momentum and all the energy they took in reaching out for help, which is not a small thing. It's a massive act."

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Reprieve on Default Rates

Inside Higher Ed

September 24, 2014

By Michael Stratford

WASHINGTON -- Colleges with large populations of low-income students have for months worried that their former students' high rates of default on student loans would eliminate their access to student aid under stricter federal standards that fully take effect this year.

But the Obama administration, which is to officially announce the default rates for all colleges on Wednesday, is now giving some institutions a break.

The U.S. Department of Education said Tuesday that it would simply leave out some defaulted loans when calculating the default rate of the colleges facing a loss of federal student aid.

That "adjustment" to the default rate calculations, according to the announcement, helped an unspecified number of colleges avoid the penalties they would otherwise have faced this year for having default rates above the threshold set by Congress. Lawmakers changed the standard in 2008, but this is the first year that colleges face penalties for three-year default rates, as opposed to two-year rates.

Community colleges and some historically black colleges and universities had pressed the Education Department for relief from the new standard.

On Tuesday, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said he was pleased that no historically black colleges and universities would face penalties for their default rates this year. Fourteen historically black institutions had default rates above the 30-percent threshold last year.

Speaking to a conference of black college leaders, Duncan attributed the change to "the tremendous effort we made together." However, he added, "some institutions remain troublingly close to the line."

In calculating default rates, the Education Department typically looks at a cohort of loan borrowers at an institution, and then tallies how many of those borrowers defaulted on a loan three years after entering repayment. Colleges are allowed, on a case-by-case basis, to ask the department to remove some defaulted borrowers from the calculation for a range of reasons, including errors.

To make the "adjustment" announced Tuesday, officials said they identified which colleges were on the verge of losing their student aid, and then removed from their cohort borrowers who defaulted on one loan but had not defaulted on another loan. The non-

defaulted loan, they said, had to have been in repayment, deferment or forbearance for at least 60 days.

The adjustment was also applied retroactively to colleges' three-year default rates for the past two years. Sanctions apply only to colleges when their default rate is 30 percent or higher for three consecutive years (or, if it surges to 40 percent in any single year). (An earlier version of this paragraph incorrectly stated the threshold for when colleges face sanctions for high default rates.)

In justifying the default rate calculation changes, which are unusual, the department's announcement cited the fact that some borrowers have different slices of their federal student loan debt managed by different loan servicing companies, a problem known as "split servicing." The problem arose several years ago when the Education Department began buying some -- but not all -- loans issued through the now-defunct federal bank-based lending program.

The department has not previously adjusted loan default rates in response to the "split servicing" problem, which it has said previously that it has resolved in some cases.

It is not clear from the department's announcement whether it only removed defaulted loans affected by "split servicing" from the calculation or dropped a broader category of loans. Further, it was unclear whether the reprieve applied to any for-profit colleges, which typically have among the highest default rates.

A department spokeswoman declined to comment Tuesday on the changes the department made to the default rates.

'Free Passes'

Critics of the department's change said they were concerned that it means colleges are not going to be held accountable for the full scope of the defaults of their former students.

"It raises some serious concerns," said Debbie Cochrane, a researcher at the Institute for College Access and Success, an advocacy group that has long tracked default rates. "The adjustments that the department announced means that schools are not being held accountable for defaults just because they're presumed to have a split servicing."

"If a school isn't held accountable for a default, then the borrower shouldn't be either," she said.

It was also unclear Tuesday whether the department would exclude certain loans from the calculation of national default rates.

"We won't know how many free passes the colleges got," Cochrane said.

The department said that while officials won't count certain default loans against a college's default rate, that doesn't otherwise change students' obligations. Any defaulted

loan removed from a college's calculation still "remains in its current status for collection and other purposes," the announcement said.

The expansion from two-year default rates to three-year default rates was designed by Congress to hold colleges more accountable for defaults. A House report in 2008 said the change was aimed, in part, at making it "more difficult for institutions to avoid defaults from being counted."

Representative George Miller of California, the top Democrat on the House education committee, was one lawmaker who pushed for the expanded three-year default rates. He questioned the department's adjustment to the loan rates on Tuesday.

"Any changes in the student loan system that reduce transparency and consistency may compromise our ability to hold poor-performing colleges accountable," Miller said in a statement. "The department should be doing everything it can to ensure student borrowers who have defaulted have every opportunity for redress."

Boost for Two-Year Colleges

Advocates for community colleges, meanwhile, praised the department's adjustment of the default rates. Community colleges are among the institutions that benefited from recalculated rates.

"We believe that the department has acted responsibly by not holding financially needy students hostage to the shortcomings of servicers and other parties involved in loan administration," said David Baime, senior vice president for government relations and policy analysis at the American Association of Community Colleges.

Jee Hang Lee, vice president for public policy and external relations at the Association of Community College Trustees, said the department's default data was messy.

"Clearly the department was unable to sanction any institution based upon the data," he said.