

Consultation Council Task Force on Counseling

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ABSTRACT

In December 2000, the Consultation Council reviewed and discussed a Consultation Digest prepared by the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), which recommended that the Chancellor establish a Consultation Task Force to study the counselor-to-student ratio in California community colleges. At the time, the Chancellor declared the issue an academic and professional matter and charged the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges with convening the Task Force.

This report will present the findings of the Task Force as well as make recommendations for further action by the Consultation Council and include the following components:

- The role of counselors in California community colleges
 - Counseling Program Requirements, Title 5
 - Matriculation
 - Transfer
 - Academic Senate papers
- The effective counselor/student ratio
 - Carnegie Report
 - California Tomorrow
 - Program based funding standard
 - Successful programs: Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and Puente
- Where are we now?
 - Students' perceptions
 - The current counselor/student ratio
 - Counselors' perceptions

INTRODUCTION

The California Community College System is the largest postsecondary educational system in the world—made up of 108 community colleges and educating over 2.5 million students each year. Since 1998, the student transfers to the University of California have increased by 21%, and to the California State University by 12.2%. In response to other systemwide goals, the associate degrees awarded have increased by 9.4%, and the number of successful course completions in vocational/occupational courses have increased by 18% (Nussbaum, 2002).

According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission's 2000 enrollment projections (2002), the community colleges are expected to enroll 528,000 additional students between 2000 and 2010. The state's ability to accommodate the full tidal wave of 714,000 California students depends heavily on the community colleges' success at enrolling, educating and transferring those students who seek a bachelor's or higher degree (p.15). As the capacity at the four-year universities becomes more limited, the California community colleges will play a continuing critical role in producing qualified transfer-ready students and in addressing the growing need for developmental education.

Given the broad diversity of the students we serve, their vast differences in culture, language, socioeconomic status and academic preparation, the multiple academic planning functions provided by counselors are absolutely essential to our institutional success. This point was recognized in the intent language of the landmark community college legislation, AB1725:

Open access to community colleges must be assured for all adults who can benefit from instruction[; such access] is meaningful only if supported by a system of assessment, counseling and placement that assists students in identifying their talents and abilities, directs them to courses that meet their needs, and maintains standards designed to ensure their success (Vasconcellos, 1988).

The Board of Governors, in its Basic Agenda (1992), recognized the obligation of California community colleges to provide opportunities for students to succeed and approved Title 5 regulations to delineate the need for counseling faculty to help meet that obligation. The Counseling Task Force, in what follows, examines the roles of counselors in the community colleges, explores the issue of what would constitute adequate access to counseling services, and concludes with an examination of the current state of access and the perspectives of both students and counselors with regard to that status.

THE ROLES OF COUNSELORS IN CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Title 5 Regulations Specifying the Roles of Counselors

The Board of Governors has demonstrated its commitment to providing adequate counseling services to all students by requiring, as a minimum condition for the receipt of state aid, that all California community colleges offer counseling services for their students. Title 5 §51018 clearly articulates these requirements:

(b) The governing board of a community college district shall provide and publicize an organized and functioning counseling program in each college within the district. Counseling programs shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) academic counseling, in which the student is assisted in assessing, planning, and implementing his or her immediate and long-range academic goals;

(2) career counseling, in which the student is assisted in assessing his or her aptitudes, abilities, and interests, and is advised concerning the current and future employment trends;

(3) personal counseling, in which the student is assisted with personal, family, or other social concerns, when that assistance is related to the student's education; and

(4) coordination with the counseling aspects of other services to students which may exist on the campus, including, but not limited to, those services provided in programs for students with special needs, skills testing programs, financial assistance programs, and job placement services.

(c) Counseling services as specified in Subsection (b)(1), (2), and (3) shall be provided to first-time students enrolled for more than six units, students enrolled provisionally, and students on academic or progress probation.

The Counseling Role in Matriculation

The matriculation process provides students with a structure of components that, when followed, provides students with a series of steps to be taken to promote success. It is up to all colleges to develop and update their matriculation plans so as to best serve the unique student needs in their communities. The matriculation components will provide students with accurate and timely information and will assist them through professional counseling to define realistic, reachable educational goals and to construct a plan to reach them. The matriculation process is intended to assure all students access to higher educational opportunities. Additionally, matriculation increases institutional effectiveness and the college/district's ability to match students' needs with available resources. Title 5 §55520 defines the components minimally required for student matriculation services:

At a minimum, each community college district shall provide students, except as exempted pursuant to §55532, with all of the following matriculation services:

- (a) the processing of applications for admission;
- (b) orientation and pre-orientation services designed to provide nonexempt students and potential students, on a timely basis, information concerning college procedures and course scheduling, academic expectations, financial assistance, and any other matters the college or district finds appropriate;
- (c) assessment for all nonexempt students pursuant to §55524;
- (d) counseling or advisement for nonexempt students pursuant to §55523;
- (e) assistance in developing a student educational plan pursuant to §55525, which identifies the student's educational objectives and the courses, services, and programs to be used to achieve them;
- (f) post enrollment evaluation, pursuant to §55526, of each student's progress; and
- (g) referral of students to:
 - (1) support services which may be available, including, but not limited to, counseling, financial aid, health services, campus employment placement services, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, campus child care services, tutorial services, and Disabled Students Programs and Services; and
 - (2) specialized curriculum offerings including but not limited to, pre-collegiate basic skills courses and programs in English as a Second Language.

Counseling faculty play a central role in all but the first of these matriculation components. The following describes those components as well as the counseling role in each.

Orientation

Matriculation regulations ensure that community colleges provide students with information about their rights and responsibilities as college students, as well as what services and information the college can provide them. This information is provided through a variety of media including written, video, and in-person presentations. College procedures, course information, and availability of financial assistance and other support services are integral portions of these presentations, as are campus tours and interaction with student organizations. Counseling faculty are key players in the orientation process, which may begin as outreach to the high schools and even to middle schools. Orientation presentations are also developed in different media (video, handbooks, audio tapes, CD, online materials), and multilingual presentations. Counseling faculty are the key faculty who provide to new prospective students complex information about their educational options (including Associate degrees and available transfer plans), career options, and what other resources the college provides to the community as (Financial Aid, EOPS, DSPS, tutoring, career center and job placement services etc.), as well as the certificate and training programs, personal enrichment and lifelong learning opportunities available.

Assessment

Education Code and Title 5 Regulations direct colleges to collect comprehensive information about individual students in order to facilitate student success. Matriculation regulations have required multiple measures assessment of students for the past eleven years, a position that is increasingly being adopted by colleges and universities across the nation. Counseling faculty utilize multiple measures for placement advice to ensure that no single test score or assessment measure is used to place students into courses.

Counseling faculty are professionally trained to use multiple criteria that can be used to form a holistic “portrait” of each student denoting strengths, areas of needed improvement, support service needs, placement test scores, study skills, learning and physical disabilities, computational and language skills, and so forth.

The students are then more accurately placed into the appropriate subject level. The counselors use the Assessment process as part of gathering critical information for the development of an accurate and effective educational plan. The counselors also provide other information that may assist and support students in the initial process of developing a more comprehensive educational plan.

Multi-measure assessments are a key component in the California Community College System, which provides open access and opportunity to all students. This commitment to open access results in the community colleges attracting students with a huge variance in skill levels, academic backgrounds, socioeconomic diversity, language and computational skills, personal and professional backgrounds. California is the only state to have taken such strides toward assuring a tailored “fit” process between students’ needs, aspirations and skill levels, and the content and design of test instruments.

Counseling and Advising

The counseling component is central to the provision of matriculation services. Title 5 matriculation regulations specify that colleges will provide counseling or advisement through appropriately trained staff. These efforts are aimed at making certain that students receive professional guidance in the identification of educational goals, appropriate course placement, and referrals to supplemental assistance with academic or personal difficulties that may be mitigated by contact with a counselor or other professional.

Student Educational Plan

Students are required under Title 5 §55530 to specify an educational goal. Then, in accordance with §55525(b), “Once a student has selected a specific educational goal, the district shall afford the student the opportunity to develop a student educational plan describing the responsibilities of the student, the requirements he or she must meet, and the courses, programs, and services required to achieve the stated goal.” All students are encouraged (and Title IV financial aid recipients and other categorical students are required) to develop a student educational plan (SEP). The SEP is a document that describes the “path” or “roadmap” by which each student can meet his/her educational goals. In conjunction with a counselor, and after the orientation and assessment

components, the student formulates this plan, building in the courses, course sequences, services and programs necessary to obtain his/her objective. The SEP is regularly reviewed and modified as appropriate. Matriculation also calls for special attention to be directed to those students who experience academic difficulty such as those undecided about their majors, students on probation, students with basic skills and/or ESL needs, and other special populations and for whom the SEP may require specific workshops or personal development courses and other strategies, extended services available to all students to be successful.

Student Follow-Up

State regulation §55526 requires colleges to provide post-enrollment evaluation of every student's progress in order to detect early indications of academic difficulty. Great numbers of California community colleges have adopted electronic "early alert" programs that allow instructional faculty to report student difficulties in a consistent, timely manner. As a result of this follow-up, students who have not declared a specific educational goal, students enrolled in pre-collegiate basic skills courses, and students on probation or not making satisfactory progress, are identified and referred to counselors for assistance and support. Counselors provide many of the interventions through one-on-one counseling which may include personal, career and academic and vocational counseling, specialized personal development courses (study skills, life management, time management, career decision making, etc.); counselors also make referrals to other campus services such as tutoring, child care, financial aid, job placement, and/or other community services available to help students overcome obstacles to their academic success.

Referral

In all of these interactions with students, counselors are engaged in fulfilling the referral requirement of the matriculation process, seeing that students are aware of and directed to the campus services and programs that will enhance their chances for success.

Matriculation's impact on student retention and persistence has been documented through studies conducted at many of the state's community colleges. Students receiving matriculation services persist and complete their educational objectives in higher numbers than those who do not receive such services. A major study completed by the Chancellor's Office Research and Analysis Unit in 1990 analyzed 38 variables for each student participant. The study population was derived from a representative sample of twelve colleges throughout the state that reflected the scope of ethnic, rural and urban, and population characteristics of all colleges. As we see detailed below, according to their study, student participation in the matriculation process leads to greater persistence.

The Chancellor's Office study of matriculation student outcomes also showed that students with less than grade 13 skill levels who received matriculation services earned a cumulative college grade point average (GPA) of 2.07; students with similar skills who received only admissions services earned a cumulative GPA of 1.33. The study also found that matriculation improves the retention of students whose skills are below freshman level (<13) and who receive full matriculation services (four to five services).

Students from lower socioeconomic levels who received full matriculation services completed 74% of their attempted units, as compared with 54% for those who utilized only admissions services.

The numbers of students served by matriculation has increased dramatically since 1987, and available research shows a strong positive correlation between matriculation services and student success. It is the under-prepared students who are benefiting most from the matriculation process; those who are identified early in the process as needing tutoring, counseling, and financial aid services and who receive intervention strategies and support are much more likely to succeed.

It has been through the efforts of the counseling component that the students who experience the matriculation process have fared so well. Their successful completion and persistence mirrors the extraordinary support for student success by counselors throughout the state, who must provide their services with resources that continue to shrink while the student population continues to grow.

The California Community College System has benefited from the matriculation provisions of Title 5. However, despite the fact that counseling is required by law and that the Board of Governors is committed to providing adequate counseling services to all students, there still remain insufficient levels of counseling services, and this promises to be exacerbated by the present and proposed budget cuts in matriculation.

Transfer and Articulation

Transfer is one of the primary missions of California community colleges, and the process of course articulation between and among campuses is the foundation of the transfer function in California. Course articulation is the process of developing a formal, written agreement that identifies courses (or sequences of courses) on a “sending” campus that are comparable to, or acceptable in lieu of, specific course requirements at a “receiving” campus. Successful completion of an articulated course assures the student and the faculty that the student has taken the appropriate course and received the necessary instruction, thus enabling the student to progress to the next level of instruction at the receiving institution.

Counseling faculty provide specialized academic and career counseling to students who wish to transfer to the four-year university. Effective articulation is an essential tool for counselors to assist students in the educational planning component of the matriculation process. The quality and quantity of formal articulation agreements between the community colleges and the baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities allow counselors to use this information with students in the development of a concise educational plan. This individual educational plan ensures that community college transfer students experience a relatively smooth academic transition and progression between the segments of higher education in California.

It is important to highlight that information is not enough. Students can be overwhelmed with the plethora of information regarding major options and with the various paths and course sequencings for transfer to the four-year university. Many community college students attend additional community colleges and have multiple goals for transfer. Those multiple goals may include different majors to different four-year universities (which require different preparation for the major) and the students may also have multiple transcripts.

The process of transcript evaluation is unique for every college campus, yet transcripts provide vital information for counselors to utilize in assisting students in completing all lower division general education and preparation for major courses. This can be a very complicated process for many students; counselors must keep updated on new enrollment management processes and admissions/impacted major policies that are constantly changing at the four-year universities. Trained professional counselors can nevertheless navigate these mazes and can provide transfer students with the ongoing counseling, follow-up and support during matriculation that lead to a successful transfer transition to the four-year university.

An indication of some of the obstacles counselors face in their efforts to serve transfer students is contained in the Chancellor's Office March 2002 document, *Transfer Capacity and Readiness in the California Community Colleges: Report to the Legislature* (2002). Here articulation officers and transfer center directors were asked to specify some of the challenges to their own effective functioning, which in turn affect counselors in their efforts to assist students. The Report summarized their concerns as follows:

Articulation Challenges: Articulation officers cited a number of challenges in the articulation process.

Staffing

- Insufficient articulation officer time
- Insufficient clerical/support time

Funding

- Insufficient/inconsistent funding

Facilities

- Insufficient/inefficient hardware/software

Four-Year Institutions

- UC/CSU "unwillingness" to articulate (those at a geographic distance often cited as unwilling)
- UC/CSU process (slow, inconsistent, inadequate)
- UC/CSU lack of major preparation information

Independents/Privates

- Independent colleges/private universities not on ASSIST
- Unwillingness to articulate

Articulation Process at Community Colleges

- Lack of up-to-date course outlines
- Approval process (slow, inefficient)
- Faculty uninformed, uninvolved, or uninterested

CAN

- Inefficient difficult process [NB: Since the research for this paper began, the CAN system has adopted a new process that will increase its efficiency, its ease, its more rapid response, and its inclusion of many UC discipline faculty in reviewing CAN descriptors.] Confusing to faculty, students and staff
- Delays in approval at CAN office
- Lack of UC participation

ASSIST

- ASSIST—Slow, operational difficulties
- ASSIST—Lacking in certain features and formats

Challenges in Transfer: Transfer Center directors cited the following barriers:

Student Related

- Lack of academic skills and/or preparation
- Transportation, housing, child care, family support
- Lack of understanding of the transfer process
- Changing goals or majors, indecision
- Missed deadlines/appointments, failure to seek assistance

Academic

- Insufficient course offerings
- Course scheduling
- Course difficulty
- Lack of faculty involvement and/or need for training

Transfer Center Operations

- Lack of adequate staffing
- Information (availability and accuracy related to requirements, dissemination)
- Inadequate budget
- Inadequate facilities/equipment

Four-year Institutions

- Geographical distance
- Admission process or policies
- Insufficient representative visits

- Admission limits (capacity) or schedule (no winter/spring)

Financial Aid

- Perception of need
- Complicated process/lack of information

Articulation

- Lack of general articulation (volume)
- Lack of major preparation articulation

Counseling

- Training for counselors
- Access (not enough available appointments)
- Inadequate staffing

Data/Information

- Lack of student tracking
- Transcript information (need for electronic transcripts)

Administration

- Transfer not an institutional priority

Transfer as a Mission

The California Legislature recognizes the importance of transfer from community colleges to four-year universities, as is clear from the following recommendation from the California Master Plan for Education (p. 5):

Recommendation 11.5: The California Community Colleges, California State University, and University of California systems should collaborate to strengthen the programs in community colleges that prepare students to transfer successfully to the California State University or the University of California and to ensure that those courses are acceptable for transfer credit at all campuses of the California State University or the University of California.

As legislators and the Governor consider funding cuts to the community colleges in times of economic downturn, they must consider that one of the first effects of such “economies” is a freeze on hiring—or the actual laying off—of non-instructional counseling faculty. As the number of counseling faculty decreases and the number of students increases, the lack of access to counseling faculty becomes acute for all students. In bad economic times, admissions requirements and other “rules of the game” at four-year institutions are apt to change more rapidly and more often than usual, thus making lack of access to counseling particularly serious for community college transfer students. When the state cuts funds to the community colleges, in the area of transfer as elsewhere, the state winds up working against itself and its own goals.

The Academic Senate on the Role of Counseling

In 1995, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges adopted *The Role of Counseling Faculty in the California Community Colleges* (1995). This paper clarified the role of counseling as a discipline in the California Community College System, provided a foundation for discussion of the use of paraprofessionals in the delivery of counseling services, and provided local academic senates with a planning resource when developing policy and implementing recommendations associated with student success. The Academic Senate's paper also described the relationship of counseling faculty to the mission of California community colleges. Counseling faculty assist students to succeed by helping them through academic, career, and personal counseling. The paper recognized that "[q]uality counseling programs staffed by professional counseling faculty are critical to assure that students achieve their educational and career goals."

While the 1995 paper defined the role of counseling faculty, it did not discuss counseling standards. In 1997, the Academic Senate adopted *Standards and Practices for California Community College Counseling Programs* (1997). Through the collaborative efforts of the Counseling and Library Faculty Issues Committee of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges and the Chancellor's Office Regional Counseling Facilitators Group, a set of universal standards of practice for all community college counseling programs was created. These standards were to be used in the design, development, and review of counseling department policies and practices. The standards developed in the Senate's paper were based on counseling services as defined in Accreditation Standards, Education Code, Title 5, and the ethical code of the American Counseling Association.

Most relevant to this current Task Force research were the references to core counseling functions faculty perform and those functions critical to accomplishing the mission of California community colleges. As seen below, the core functions from the *Standards* paper both reflect the minimum standards of Title 5 (p. 4) and go well beyond them.

- 1) Academic counseling, in which the student is assisted in assessing, planning and implementing his or her immediate and long-range academic goals.
- 2) Career counseling, in which the student is assisted in assessing his or her aptitudes, abilities, and interests, and is advised concerning current and future employment trends.
- 3) Personal counseling, in which the student is assisted with personal, family or other social concerns, when that assistance is related to the student's education.
- 4) Crisis intervention, either directly or through cooperative arrangements with other resources on campus or in the community.

- 5) Multicultural counseling, in which students are counseled with a respect for their origins and cultural values.
- 6) Outreach to students and community to encourage students to avail themselves of services, focused on maximizing all students' potential to benefit from the academic experience.
- 7) Consultation to the college governance process and liaison to the college community to make the environment as beneficial to the intellectual, emotional, and physical development of students as possible.
- 8) Research and review of counseling programs and services with the goal of improving their effectiveness.
- 9) Training and professional development for counseling staff, interns, and others in the college community.

In sum, effective counseling is critical to the achievement of the multiple missions of the California community colleges. Counselors provide guidance on academic choices, on career decisions, and on personal issues; they are trained to intervene in crisis situations; they are at the heart of virtually all matriculation activities; and their knowledge and guidance is essential to smooth and successful student transfer to four-year institutions. Given, especially, the broad diversity of the students we serve, their vast differences in culture, language, socioeconomic status and academic preparation, the multiple guidance functions provided by counselors are absolutely essential to our institutional success and can in no way be viewed as dispensable services. If we revisit the intent language of AB1725 cited earlier, it is clear where we must place the emphasis:

Open access to community colleges must be assured for all adults who can benefit from instruction, which access is *meaningful* only if supported by a system of assessment, counseling and placement that assists students in identifying their talents and abilities, directs them to courses that meet their needs, and maintains standards designed to ensure their success.

ACCESS TO COUNSELING: WHERE WE SHOULD BE

As we have stated, student access to quality counseling services is a key to an effective community college education. A measure of counselors' accessibility is the counselor/student ratio, and the Task Force examined several sources of opinion as to what that ratio ought to be.

The Carnegie Report

As early as 1965, the *National Committee for Appraisal and Development of Junior College Student Personnel Programs* in a Carnegie report (1965) recognized counseling as an essential service to community colleges in fulfilling their mission of providing access to comprehensive educational and service programs. This report claimed that, with open access, community colleges have “assumed the enormously difficult task of educating highly diversified student bodies” (p. 2). In making the claim that counseling services were essential, the authors of this report understood that to serve their diverse student body, community colleges must provide “highly differentiated educational programs” and recognized the need to assist students with adequate counseling services. The report insists that “counseling and instruction are equal partners in the education of junior college students, more than at any other level of education” (p. 2).

The Carnegie Report defined the ideal national ratio standards as 1:300, not to exceed one counselor for every 500 students, basing this on a comprehensive counseling model in which counselors perform advising and other functions in addition to personal counseling.

Program Based Funding Standards

Title 5 §58732—Credit Student Services Standards—contains program-based funding specifications that can be used to calculate the number of counselors for counseling California community college students.

(4) Counseling:

(A) Pre-registration: The FTE counselors plus 25% FTE clerical support necessary to counsel each nonexempt new fall enrollee on a one-to-one basis for one-half hour each;

(B) Post-registration: The FTE counselors plus 25% FTE clerical support necessary for student educational plans, general counseling, probation counseling, and Basic Skills counseling. Eighty percent of new enrollees will be counseled for 1 hour and 15 minutes for student educational plans. Fifty percent of continuing students will be counseled for 1 hour of general counseling. Twelve percent of the continuing students will receive probationary counseling for 1 hour 45 minutes. Basic Skills students will receive an additional 30 minutes of counseling each term. Counselors are assumed to average 6.36 hours per day, 75% of which is spent with students. An allocation of \$641 per counselor is calculated for supplies.

Using these standards, the Task Force calculated that a counselor/student ratio of 1:900 would comply with Title 5 standards. Currently, this regulation is not enforced because the program improvement funds designed to fund these, and indeed all, the Program Based Funding standards have not been forthcoming from the Legislature for the past 15 years. In fact, California Community College funding is currently at about 50% of that required by the Program Based Funding standards.

California Tomorrow

In their April 2002 study, *The High-Quality Learning Conditions Needed to Support Students of Color and Immigrants at California Community Colleges* (2002), the non-profit research group California Tomorrow listed as the number one need of this student population, “better mechanisms for accessing information and counseling”. Their research indicates that 60% of community college students are the first generation in their family to attend college. Since they are the first generation, they typically do not have access to information regarding higher education within their family unit and therefore need access to counseling services that provide important information for their success in a higher education environment.

However, access to counseling is often unsatisfactory. According to California Tomorrow, “A major barrier to accessing counseling, cited by staff, counselors and students alike, is simply counselor workload.... Thus long waits, difficulty in making appointments, and rushed conversations when a student does see a counselor are characteristic” (p. 6).

Given the critical contribution of counseling to student success and the too frequent lack of access to counseling, California Tomorrow concluded with the following recommendations:

Ensure the continuation of counseling services and direct student services by adequate funding and by monitoring funding formulas and budget cuts to avoid inadvertently creating disincentives to provide such services (p. 23).

Increase the numbers of counselors to reduce counselor/student ratios, especially in districts and colleges with extremely high ratios (p. 23).

Successful Programs

There are, within the California community colleges, support programs—such as EOPS, DSP&S, CalWORKs, and Puente—in which the counselor/student ratios are far lower than for the general student population, and for which data indicate that this lowered ratio makes a significant difference for student success. California Tomorrow (2002) points out:

In the support program context (i.e., EOPS, CalWORKS, Puente), where counselors are assigned to a group of students with a more realistic ratio, almost all students speak positively and often passionately about their counselors, their supportive and caring attitudes, their help in navigating the system, and the quality of information they receive. For students who are not in support programs, however, the landscape looks quite different.

Statewide data provided by the University of California Office of the President for the Puente Program, in which the counselor/student ratio is often as low as 1:25, bear out the claim that greater access to counseling, a key component in the Puente model, contributes to increased student success, as the table on the next page indicates.

Puente Students Surpass Statewide Success Rates In Developmental and Collegiate English Courses

Five Year Record: FALL 1996 - SPRING 2001

Pre-English 1A

Puente Students	FA 1996	FA 1997	FA 1998	FA 1999	FA 2000	5-Yr Average
Number Enrolled	676	806	808	947	772	
Number Successful ^a	527	641	637	781	619	
Success Rate	80%	79%	81%	77%	80%	80%*
Number of Colleges	22	28	28	32	30	

Non-Puente Students ^b	FA 1996	FA 1997	FA 1998	FA 1999	FA 2000	5-Yr Average
Number Enrolled	11,867	14,466	13,504	16,233	16779	
Number Successful	6,784	8,382	7,874	8,623	9967	
Success Rate	57%	58%	58%	53%	59%	56%
Number of Colleges	15	19	17	20	30	

English 1A

Puente Students	SP 1997	SP 1998	SP 1999	SP 2000	SP2001	5-Yr Average
Number Enrolled	541	628	725	766	704	
Number Successful	390	486	528	567	461	
Success Rate	72%	77%	73%	74%	65%	72%*
Number of Colleges	20	28	29	32	30	

Non-Puente Students	SP 1997	SP 1998	SP 1999	SP 2000	SP2001	5-Yr Average
Number Enrolled	21,465	27,712	30,065	32,259	31,086	
Number Successful	12,402	16,066	17,068	18,555	18,547	
Success Rate	58%	58%	57%	58%	60%	57%
Number of Colleges	21	27	29	32	31	

Source: CCC Chancellor's Office MIS provided Puente and non-Puente summary data.

*Statistically significant difference from non-Puente students.

^a Final grades of "credit", "C" or better are defined as "Academic Success".

^b Non-Puente Students taking the same course at the same college.

A collaborative effort between the California Community Colleges and the UC System, the Puente Project combines both teaching and counseling services to help the student to succeed. The mission of the Puente Project is to increase the number of educationally underserved students who:

- Enroll in four-year colleges and universities;
- Earn college degrees; and
- Return to the community as mentors and leaders of future generations.

Puente provides three areas of service to students: teaching, counseling, and mentoring. The program trains school and college staff members to conduct this program at their sites. Among the areas of training expertise that Puente has developed over its 20-year history are innovative counseling and teaching methodologies for underserved students, strategies for integrating local communities into an academic program, and cross-functional teamwork.

EOPS programs are often taken as the ideal for statewide counseling. The primary goal of EOPS is to encourage the enrollment, retention and transfer of students who have encountered language, social, economic, and educational disadvantages, and to facilitate the successful completion of these students' goals and objectives in college. EOPS offers academic and support counseling, financial aid and other support services. EOPS has provided a caseload model that has proven to be effective in retention and in student success and transfer.

In her annual report for the year 2001-02, Janice Johnson (2003), the director of Grossmont College's Exemplary Award winning EOPS program, made the following observations:

The counselor student ratio in the program is 1:490.

The persistence/retention rate of the 1577 students served was 91.5%.

75.4% of students served achieved a GPA of 2.0 or higher.

The work of EOPS Counselors is very specialized and intense [Johnson writes]:

Grossmont College EOPS has developed a model "Student Success Plan" that focuses on students who have less than a 2.0 grade point average.

...This concentrated plan has had dramatic impact on students who did not succeed. They were caught in the "revolving door" of education. Last fall, 53% [students were] retained when, based on a campus-wide study, we would have expected only 1 in 6 to continue for the spring. This work is done in individual, specialized counseling appointments [emphasis added].

EOPS Counselors have instituted a systematic method of completing long-range education plans for all students. After an EOPS application review, eligible students first attend an individual intake appointment where a 2-3 semester plan is developed. Students then utilize priority registration.

This is followed by an orientation the Friday before classes begin. Students are then scheduled with an additional appointment for a long-range plan that takes them to their stated educational goal. Completing these plans allows for students to plan carefully their transfer/graduation semester and to be well prepared for Transfer Agreements (UCSD and other UC Campuses) and for impacted major and transfer agreements that now must be completed for SDSU or being imposed for Fall 2004.

Reasonable counselor workloads, or counselor/student ratios, clearly make a significant difference to student success. Where, then, are we now?

ACCESS TO COUNSELING: WHERE WE ARE

The Task Force was charged with conducting a study that included a survey of counseling practices, staffing and models at California community colleges. To accomplish this charge, the Task Force considered three components: student satisfaction; counseling faculty assignments; and actual counseling practices.

What California Community College Students Think

Noel-Levitz, a national consulting organization, conducted a nationwide survey from 1995 – 2002 to assess student satisfaction with college services. The purpose of that survey was to gauge student perceptions on how crucial they find certain services to be and how satisfied they were with their colleges' performance across a wide range of academic and support services provided by colleges. The Task Force secured data from the Noel-Levitz survey for 32 colleges in the California Community College System. The Task Force gratefully acknowledges Dr. Judith Beachler, Director of the Los Rios Community College District Office of Institutional Research, for sharing the analytical design adopted to summarize the data and for summary observations.

Noel-Levitz sought opinions of students in the areas of: instructional effectiveness; academic advising/counseling; registration effectiveness; safety and security; concern for the individual; academic services; admissions and financial aid; campus climate; services for excellence; student centeredness; campus support services; and responsiveness to diverse populations.

Based on Beachler's analysis of the Noel-Levitz data, the three most important areas to students are:

1. academic advising/counseling;
2. instructional effectiveness; and
3. registration effectiveness.

The items with large performance gaps include:

1. academic advising/counseling; and
2. safety and security.

These two elements are of high importance to students but are also among the lowest in terms of satisfaction, with the exception of small California community colleges. This suggests that we may need to look more deeply into the reasons why students perceive counseling and advising services as unsatisfactory.

Why Students Are Not More Satisfied with Counseling Services: The Measure of Access

The Counseling Task Force conducted a survey of California community colleges' counseling departments in Spring 2002 to capture a snapshot of the access students have to counseling services. The survey was sent to Chief Student Services Officers at all California community colleges and 103 campuses responded. The Task Force used a survey rather than MIS data because the MIS figures indicate the number of counseling faculty in the California Community College System but does not distinguish between counseling faculty who provide direct counseling to students and those who are assigned to other areas.

The Task Force felt that it was necessary to survey how many counseling faculty were actually available to serve the broad needs of the general student population. The survey asked counseling departments to identify the number of FTE counseling faculty on their campus for Fall 2000 and of that number how many were reassigned to special programs or other activities. For example, counseling faculty may be released to serve in such areas as transfer centers, athletics, Puente or MESA projects, honors programs, articulation, EOPS, DSP&S or CalWORKs and therefore not be available to provide direct counseling services to the general student population.

Using the data gathered and the total number of students for Fall 2000 (based on MIS data provided by the Chancellor's Office)—minus the number of students served under special programs—the Task Force calculated the counselor/student ratio. The Counseling Faculty Assignment survey results indicated that our current ratio for 108 community colleges statewide is **one counseling faculty member to 1,918 students**. The survey results suggest that most of our campuses lack “adequate” counseling services, and that California community college students do not have adequate or optimum access to counseling services.

What California Community College Counselors Think

The Task Force also developed a survey to assess the adequacy of student access to counseling services as well as the levels and kinds of services students need to succeed. Information was needed about the practices, the issues, and/or the obstacles that counseling faculty face on the front line in delivering counseling services. The survey was conducted via the Internet during Spring and Fall 2002 and was sent to members of the Counseling Listserv. Over 649 counseling faculty responded to the survey. Below is a summary of two open-ended questions contained in the survey.

Question 5: Please list any frequent factors (with a word or short phrase) that in your opinion hinder your efforts in counseling/advising students.

The following is a list of the most frequent responses of counseling faculty:

- Not enough time in appointments with students
- Not enough time for follow-up (e.g., students, e-mails, phone, meetings)
- Student to counselor ratio; too many students to serve
- Student access to counselors; not enough counseling appointments available
- Technology/Computer problems (e.g., accessing information; technology not user friendly)
- Too many administrative responsibilities; too many meetings
- Lack of resources (e.g., transcripts and records)
- Too many special projects assigned without replacement of counseling hours
- Too many clerical tasks (e.g., checking prerequisites, open classes)
- Inadequate clerical support
- Excessive paperwork (forms)
- Lack of support or poor leadership from administrative staff
- Transcript evaluation problems
- Excessive phone interruptions during student appointments
- Lack of privacy-inadequate offices to maintain confidentiality
- Communication with limited English speaking students
- Student “no shows,” late for appointment, or not prepared for appointment
- Too many drop-in appointments or too little time to conduct them
- Staying current about information that is always changing
- Inadequate articulation with universities, especially private ones
- Need for training related to counseling issues
- Budget cuts and lack of sufficient staffing

Question 7: If you were able to increase the services your department provides, in what area would you prefer the greatest help?

The survey results identified six categories in greatest need of help.

- Articulation (45.6%),
- More clerical support (44.4%),
- Personal crisis training (43.5%),
- Training in career counseling (41.8%),
- Technology training (37.1%),
- Transfer (36.1%).

[N.B. These figures do not add up to 100% because individuals were allowed to provide more than one response.]

The survey results confirmed what would be expected from the quantitative data of student satisfaction surveys: due to a variety of factors, California community college counseling faculty are unable to provide adequate counseling services.

CONCLUSION

Following more than fifteen years of concerted effort to provide educational reform through the Matriculation Act of 1986 and AB 1725, California public community college education again confronts a dire lack of fiscal resources. The core of the community colleges, to provide access and equitable opportunity, is threatened by the dissipation of the state budget. Community colleges seek to provide access and opportunity to students who choose to better their lives; our colleges offer an experience characterized by concern for students' progress, learning, and success. It is only through information and careful academic and vocational planning, career, academic and personal counseling, support and guidance for all community college students that all students can reach optimum success. This support requires professional skills, experiences and empathy that come from the counseling faculty. Counseling programs staffed by professional counseling faculty are critical to assure that students achieve their educational and career goals.

It is clear that counseling faculty have not been provided the resources needed to provide optimum comprehensive counseling services; both the counselor/student ratio of 1:1918 and the results from the Counseling Practices Survey and the Student Satisfaction Survey demonstrate a lack of "adequate" counseling services for our students. This Counseling Task Force report confirms that California community college students currently need much better access to counseling faculty at community colleges throughout the state.

Society's need for an informed citizenry and a skilled work force, and the individual's need for intellectual and personal betterment, career exploration, and retraining opportunities do not diminish when funding diminishes. Greater numbers of students continue to swell the colleges to bursting; more counseling services are needed, not less. Yet the progress made to date in providing guidance for community college students is now in jeopardy as counseling budgets evaporate.

Recently, a *Preliminary Report* of the Board of Governors' Real Cost of Education Project (2003) proposed a radical increase in access to counseling services when it recommended a counselor/student ratio of 1:370. The report concluded that providing a quality education to today's California community college student would cost \$9,200 per FTES, or more than twice our current funding, and that access to counseling would be a major quality cost driver.

In conclusion, the Task Force would like to communicate the following to the Governor, the Legislature, the Consultation Council, the Board of Governors, and the public: The data show that when there is access to adequate, comprehensive counseling services, student success is significantly enhanced. The data also show that access to counseling in our community colleges is inadequate by every measure. To enroll students and then deny them essential means of success is a waste of resources; given the disadvantaged status of so many of our students, it is also a compromising of the democratic ideal of universal opportunity. Both economic common sense and the demand for social justice,

then, demand that California invest the resources necessary to provide adequate access to quality counseling services for the students of the California community colleges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recommends that the system pursue funding to ensure that colleges make progress towards a counselor/student ratio of 1:370 as soon as possible.
2. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recommends that until such progress is possible that existing counselor/student ratios at our colleges not be permitted to deteriorate.

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