

## Merritt College Counseling Department

### Counselor Meeting Minutes

May 23, 2011

Meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. In attendance: Allen, Ciddio, Decoursey, Ilarde, Khoo, Zielke, Paniagua (intern)

#### Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

As requested, counselors reviewed emails (received from Dr. Gravenberg) regarding the Direct Loan Program. The counselors offered the following feedback:

- Students who have already completed a BA (and are returning to school for training in another area or to qualify for graduate school, as well as those from out of state and those in costly programs (nursing, radiologic science, etc) should be given special consideration for loans since they are not eligible for financial aid through FAFSA. These students should not be punished because of other students' abuses of the system.
- Counselors would like some *actual data* on the number of students (as well as the percentage) who are defaulting, both at Merritt and at the other 3 campuses.
- Counselors question the number stated in the email from Judy Cohen; it indicates that "according to staff, over 90% of the students are from the COSER program." Is this accurate or an estimate?
- Typically, short education plans (2 semesters) are required for students requesting loans. This may not be adequate.
- Can more of our students qualify for work study? What would be the process for putting more students to work, rather than them seeking loans?
- How is the amount of work study money determined at the 4 campuses in the district?
- How do other districts handle students seeking loans? Are there procedures/best practices that Merritt might implement to improve our numbers?
- What other solutions are being explored, other than withdrawal?
- What is the content of the orientation students attend prior to receiving their loans? Is it sufficient? Education regarding the impact of not paying off loans must be heavily emphasized.
- In the past a counselor worked with Financial Aid, assisting with the creation of education plans. Has this been considered as a strategy for students seeking loans?
- Counselors are not advocating for Merritt to cancel the loan program.

#### COUN schedule for spring, 2012

Counselors planned COUN courses we will offer for spring, 2012. Discussion included identifying which counselors are interested in teaching and at what times. M. Ciddio voiced her concern that DSPS students need to be considered as we develop the plan. She requested that the department chairs meet with Ron Nelson on this topic.

## New Business

McLean shared that the Academic Senate meeting on May 18 was where administration responded to the recent survey about faculty/staff's level of confidence in management. It was reported to have been a civil meeting. Over the summer sessions will be conducted in which faculty will brainstorm possible improvements re: communication, various campus grants, etc.

McLean shared that Dr. Berry has expressed interest in attending a counseling dept. meeting to discuss the campus' approach to scheduling classes. He recommends that we also invite Dr. Gravenberg to the same meeting.

Zielke raised a question about how Merritt determines when to offer our classes. What guides the process; what is the system? Students continue to be frustrated and thwarted when trying to enroll in two classes for our summer session. Problems also continue regarding scheduling for spring and fall terms.

McLean informed counselors that he will be attending his final CEMPC meeting on 5/26. A new counselor needs to begin attending CEMPC in the fall. CEMPC meets once per month.

Counselors shared their concern about the fact that PCCD colleges are reducing or eliminating counselor coverage this summer: COA doesn't have any counselor coverage this summer Merritt has reduced coverage this summer. In addition, Ilarde shared that BCC contract faculty are working their 11<sup>th</sup> month during July, which is a breach of the contract.

Issue was also raised that BCC is short of counselors and that Merritt may be losing a counselor to them.

Paniagua shared that Adelante!, a summer bridge program, will be offered at the Fruitvale Center. They are looking for students for this learning community. Courses include ENGL 252A/B, COUN 207A and COUN 200A.

Ilarde stated that we need to be find out what A & R's high school concurrent enrollment procedure will be this year. High school students will be able to enroll beginning on June 1. *(Allen checked with S. DeLaTorre who said if the high school students have matriculation holds on their record that they will be sent to Counseling with the matric form. This is the same procedure that was followed during summer '10.)*

Meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.