

BOARD OF TRUSTEES	INFORMATION
Santa Monica Community College District	April 5, 2016

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION ITEM 3

Santa Monica College Counseling Services: The Impact of Counseling Services on Degree Recipients and New Counseling Initiatives that Address Equity and Completion

Introduction

Santa Monica College continues to provide strong and vibrant counseling services that extend across twenty-three special counseling programs and/or service locations. Thanks to the support of the District as well as specialized categorical funding sources that include SSSP, Equity, BSI, Title V, and more, the Counseling Department currently employs 181 counselors who provide academic counseling, psychological counseling, lead counseling-related student success workshops and/or teach counseling-related courses (Couns 1- Study Skills; Couns 11 - Orientation to Higher Education; Couns 12 - Career Planning; Couns 15 – Job Search Skills; Couns 16 – Job Success Skills; Couns 17 – Orientation; Couns 20 - Student Success Seminar; and a series of specialized DSPS counseling courses).

In general, SMC counseling faculty are seen as leaders throughout the college community, serving on critical committees and partnering with instructional departments to collaborate on key institutional initiatives such as Equity, Completion and STEM. SMC counselors continue to record well over 100,000 student contacts annually through one-on-one and small group meetings with students. Couns 20, the 3 unit, UC/CSU transferable Student Success Seminar, continues to be one of the most enrolled in courses at SMC, second only to English 1, which fulfills a requirement for transfer as well as the AA degree.

Presentation of Data

In an effort to continue to understand the importance and impact of counseling services at SMC, at the request of the Counseling Department leadership, the Institutional Research Office conducted a follow up study to the 2014 research effort that revealed that “first –time freshmen who had contact with a counselor before and/or during their initial term at Santa Monica College persisted to the subsequent spring and fall terms at significantly higher rates (over twice as likely) than their counterparts who did not meet with a counselor.” This follow up study looked at all students, not just first-time freshmen, and sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What percentage of fall 2015 credit students have or have had significant counseling contact?
2. What percentage of students who earned an Associate Degree in 2013-14 had significant counseling contact? Does counseling contact influence the number of semesters it takes students to complete the degree?

Findings of Research Question #1

Data revealed that 86.8% of all students (full-time freshmen and continuing) enrolled in a credit course at SMC in fall 2015 had a least one counseling contact. This contact could have been through a general counseling center (i.e., Transfer/Counseling Center, Welcome Center, International Student Center and/or online counseling), a specialized counseling program, enrollment in Couns 20, or a combination of two or more of these counseling services.

Perhaps even more noteworthy is a breakdown by demographic variable:

Table 1. Percentage of Counseled Students by Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Count	Percent Counseled
Ethnicity/Race		
Asian	4752	88.9%
Black	2816	87.2%
Hispanic	11949	89.8%
Native American	52	82.7%
Pacific Islander	82	76.8%
Two or more races	1187	83.8%
White	8242	80.5%
Residence Status		
California	25183	84.8%
Out-of-state	1994	90.6%
Foreign Country	3442	99.2%
Enrollment Status		
First-time Freshmen	5888	91.0%
Reverse Transfer	3591	63.2%
Returning Student	3129	82.1%
Continuing Student	17437	93.7%

Data provided from SMC Research Brief #1010

Clearly this data suggests that a large majority of students, including our underrepresented populations, are availing themselves of counseling services.

Findings of Research Question #2

Data revealed that of the 1,325 students who received an AA degree in 2013-14, all but 3 students had at least one counseling contact while a student at SMC. 97% of these students received counseling in one of the general counseling centers (Transfer Counseling Center, Welcome Center, International Student Counseling Center and/or online counseling) while just under 50% of the first-time freshmen also participated in a special program (Black Collegians, Latino Center, Scholars Program, EOPS, First Year Experience, Veterans Resource Center, etc.) and/or enrolled in Couns 20.

An additional analysis was conducted to determine if students who participated in a special counseling program and/or enrolled in Couns 20 took less time to complete their degree than students who did not do one of these two things.

While it was determined that first-time freshmen who belonged to a special program earned their degrees in less time, the difference was not found to be statistically significant overall. Though true, when this data was further broken down by ethnicity and race, the difference was statistically significant for African American students who participated in a special program. Please see the following table.

Table 2. Average Semesters to Degree Completion by Student Ethnicity/Race and Special Program Participation

Ethnicity/Race	Participant	Non-Participant	Difference
Asian	8.02	8.31	-0.29
Black(*)	8.22	10.82	-2.60
Hispanic	8.96	9.69	-0.73
White	7.52	8.45	-0.93

Similarly, when an analysis was done on AA degree recipients who had enrolled in Couns 20, it was concluded that African American students who enrolled in this course graduated in fewer semesters, on average, than those who did not.

Conclusions and New Efforts to Address Equity and Completion

Clearly, the data from this institutional research effort underscores the importance and value of the variety of counseling services that are offered at SMC, especially for some of our underrepresented populations. Given this, the Division of Student Affairs is grateful for the additional funding provided by SSSP and Equity that have allowed for more intentional counseling programming and intervention. What follows below are examples of new counseling initiatives aimed at addressing equity and completion issues at Santa Monica College.

New Equity Initiatives Spearheaded by Black Collegians and Adelante

Collaboration with John Adams Middle School

In spring 2015, the Black Collegians and Adelante programs began a partnership with John Adams Middle School (JAMS) that has been more formalized during the 2015-16 academic year under the leadership of Dr. Paul Jimenez, a part-time counselor, who was hired with equity funds. This partnership, in essence, brings students, parents, faculty, and staff from both institutions together with the common goal of exposing African American and Latino students to opportunities that will improve and enhance their academic journey and overall educational experience. Furthermore, this effort seeks to cultivate, empower and retain SMC student of color while simultaneously expanding this equity effort to the students of color at JAMS. Over 60 JAMS Latino and African American students have participated in this program to date. The Principal of JAMS, Steve Richardson, has referred to this program as “transformational.”

Brother-to-Brother and Sister-to-Sister Mentoring Program

An outgrowth of the SMC/JAMS partnership described above was the creation of the Brother-to-Brother Mentoring program. This program exposes JAMS students to positive male role models who demystify the “college world” for them. Additionally, Adelante and Black Collegians male students received training on becoming a mentor and the opportunity to positively impact the lives of their mentees. SMC students in the programs have been assigned mentees at JAMS with whom they interact twice per month in organized activities such as:

- Topical discussions on relevant issues (i.e., the importance of friendship and respect)
- Sporting events such flag football and basketball
- Campus tours/scavenger hunts for JAMS students on the SMC campus.

Given the success of the mentoring program for the boys at JAMS, a Sister-to-Sister Mentoring Program was developed in spring 2016 under the leadership of Maria Reynoso, a new part-time psychologist, hired with equity funds. Female student leaders from the Black Collegians and Adelante clubs serve as the mentors to the female JAMS students.

The SMC student mentors have shown a true commitment to the JAMS students and look forward to their interactions with the middle school students. There is a sense of responsibility that the SMC students exude to ensure the JAMS students see them as role models. This is a win-win equity model for both SMC and JAMS.

Noche de Familia

Given the high number of first-generation college students in the Adelante program, the Latino Center has expanded the offering of Noche de Familia (Family Night) where Adelante parents are invited to monthly seminars to learn more about the educational process and how to support their students. As of February 2016, JAMS parents are now invited to attend with SMC parents. A record 80 parents attended the most recent monthly program. The Noche de Familia seminars are conducted in Spanish by Latino Center counselors and dinner is provided free of charge to parents and their families through a continuous and very generous donation from Mr. Carlos Haro, owner of Casablanca restaurant.

Special Monthly Programs for Black Collegians and Adelante Students

In addition to the regular workshop programming that is provided each month, the Black Collegians and Adelante programs host all-female and all-male workshops once each month. These are unique, powerful and often times emotional workshops that seek to support and retain SMC students in ways not provided by any other program at SMC. Students have reported that the topics and discussions are frequently “life-changing” where they find comfort expressing very personal issues related to the cultural experience of African Americans and Latinos in American society. These workshops are very well-attended and are among the most popular series in both programs.

Counseling with an Equity Focus in STEM

SMC’s STEM Initiative is a comprehensive academic support program designed to help traditionally underrepresented students interested in STEM careers successfully complete their studies at SMC, transfer to a 4 year research orientated baccalaureate program, and ultimately enter the STEM workforce. Counseling services offered to STEM students are a critical component of the program, and are comprehensive and equity focused. The program is anchored in a philosophy that success in STEM is the product of hard work and agency rather than having a natural aptitude or being “super smart.” Counselors intentionally work to dispel self-defeating notions such as “I’m not a math person,” or that success comes solely because of a “natural talent” or “innate gift.” Instead, STEM counselors help students understand that success in STEM classes are skills that can be learned, practiced and improved. As such, students are introduced to the importance non-cognitive skills and having a growth mindset. Additionally, STEM counselors familiarize students with equity issues such as stereotype threat, unconscious bias and the hidden curriculum. Counselors are vital to the STEM program – they interact with students on an individual basis, through workshops, special events such as STEM Day, and support many of the other STEM programmatic activities.

New Completion Initiative: MyEdPlan Online Counseling Review and Intervention

As of winter 2016, counselors can now provide MyEdPlan users with an online review capability. In one transaction, counselors can either approve an online educational plan or provide students with constructive feedback regarding their plan and ask students to make changes and resubmit the plan online for counselor approval. The goal of this MyEdPlan enhancement is to significantly increase the number of counselor reviewed and approved educational plans. In the first six weeks of the program launch, counselors completed over 110 online ed plan reviews. The program which initially was limited in scope to matriculant 1’s (first-time students with an educational goal of certificate, degree or transfer) will soon be expanded to continuing students and reverse transfers. Reverse transfers with transcripts from other institutions will be asked to first meet with a counselor in person so that a transcript evaluation can be completed and entered into the SMC Degree Audit program. It is anticipated that this increased access to counselors for educational plan review should lead to increased student goal completion, as student knowledge of correct requirements is key towards progressing to graduation and/or transfer in a timely fashion.

New Completion Initiative: Transfer Completion Counselor Efforts

In fall 2014, using SSSP funding, an adjunct “completion counselor” was hired with the goal of increasing the number of students who transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The students targeted for intervention are selected based on units and GPA. These students receive phone calls, emails and are invited to meet with a counselor and/or receive assistance with their transfer application during the weekday and/or weekend. Saturday transfer workshops have proven to be well attended with over 100 students attending weekend workshops in 2014-15, and 228 attending weekend workshops to date in 2015-16. During the 2014-15 academic year the completion counselor contacted and/or assisted 752 students, and thus far during the 2015-16 academic year she has worked with 993 students. The completion counselor has reported a number of recurring themes that include: misunderstanding of transfer requirements, confusion regarding application timeline and process, and indecision about major and/or transfer school. In general, students are appreciative of the outreach and “intrusive” support, and it is anticipated that this new effort will soon yield increases in SMC transfer numbers.

Equity and Completion: New Efforts to Serve Undecided Students

According to research conducted by McMaster from the University of Canada, students who have an idea about potential careers are more likely to persist in college over their peers who have no direction. There are many external factors pulling students away from school, and without focus, students do not persist.

As a result of the recent Student Success legislation, California community college students are now required to declare a college major and educational goal by their 16th unit. The Career Services Center has been charged with helping these “undecided” first-year students make decisions in these areas. Utilizing SSSP funds, the Career Services Center recently hired three additional part-time career counselors. Rather than having these new counselors work out of the Career Services Center, they have been strategically placed in the African American Collegiate Center, the Latino Center and to work with students in the First Year Experience (FYE) program. These counselors work closely with the program leaders to identify students who could benefit from career counseling and/or are in need of a clear educational goal and/or major. They also attend program orientations and conduct program workshops upon request throughout the academic year. These new hires supplement the work of three other adjunct career counselors who serve the general population along with the faculty leader. They lead a host of workshops, teach Couns 12, make presentations in Couns 20 classes, and meet with students individually.

As a result of this new effort, per the data below, the Black Collegians and Adelante programs report significantly higher levels of participation in career counseling:

- In 2013-2014, 211 Adelante students met with a career counselor.
- In 2014-2015, 1099 Adelante students met with a career counselor.

This is an increase of 80%

- In 2013-2014, 56 Black Collegian students met with a career counselor.
- In 2014-2015, 567 Black Collegian students met with a career counselor.

This is an increase of 90%

The career counselor dedicated to the FYE program performs the same types of activities as described above with the exception of orientations and workshops. Instead, the counselor is sent a weekly list of first-year students who self-report indecision about a college major and/or educational goal. The Career Center staff then reaches out to the student and schedules an appointment with one of the career counselors.

As a result of this new effort, in 2014-2015, the FYE program reported 1,447 student contacts with an SMC career counselor. The response to this effort has been so positive that in fall 2015, the FYE career counseling program now requires each new FYE program student to meet with an SMC career counselor at least once.

Final Conclusions

The SMC Counseling Department is committed to moving the needle with regard to equity and completion, and will continue to utilize new categorical funding sources such as SSSP and Equity to further expand innovative programming efforts and more intentional intervention with at risk students.