

Admissions and Records Review

Introduction

The dual roles of an Admissions and Records Department on community college campuses are historically ones that may be perceived as being in direct opposition to one another. On the one hand, A&R staff are tasked, and do strive to engage students, enrich their experiences, encourage and assist them in achieving their educational, career and personal goals. PCC A&R staff are highly motivated to work with students, fostering a campus climate that is welcoming and supportive. On the other hand, Admissions and Records operations are some of the most tightly regulated and audited operations on a college campus. Virtually everything done in an A&R office will impact the institution either favorably or adversely. PCC A&R staff are clearly aware and well-informed of their professional responsibility to protect the institution through the consistent application of procedures and practices that meet regulatory requirements and audit standards. The juxtaposition of these dual purposes provides unique challenges for staff in that they are often required to act as the “gate-keepers”, and find themselves having to deny student requests for exceptions to existing rules or procedures while at the same time striving to deliver excellent customer service, make the student feel valued and heard. It is hard to imagine an environment more appropriate to adopt this quote from poet Maya Angelou quote as one of its guiding tenets: “I find that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” (EMP A1)

Admissions and Records was split into three separate, distinct divisions in the past, with staff assigned to either the Admissions, Registration or Student Records division within the department. As staffing was reduced and positions eliminated or combined it became necessary to pool the staff into a single department with duties distributed in a more holistic structure across the remaining personnel. In addition the Admissions and Records administrative reporting structure has changed multiple times as of late. The office has reported at various times to the VP of Students Services, Associate VP of Student Services, and multiple Interim Directors of Admissions and Records.

The office has been and continues to be the front door to the college. It is the primary contact area for students, faculty, and administration regarding student enrollment, grades, graduation, and student accountancy. Currently the Department is responsible for on- and off-campus admission, registration, grade, transcripts and graduation activity for the Pasadena Area Community College District, as well as the determination of eligibility for GI Bill benefits, residency reclassification, graduation and transfer. The department serves prospective, new, returning, continuing and former students; community members; college faculty, administrators and staff in other departments by providing information, assistance and support in a variety of functions. (EMP A1, E1)

The office is a gateway for prospective and new students, promoting access by providing admissions and registration services to including residency determination; identifying, informing and referring special populations (e.g. Foster Youth, Veterans, EOP&S, DSP&S, International Students) to appropriate programs and services; supporting and assisting students in enrollment through dual- and concurrent-enrollment programs for high school students; completion of Student Success and Support core services of Orientation, Assessment and development of a Student Educational Plan. Department staff strive to “Start students right and ensure their path toward goal completion” (EMP A1, E1).

A&R staff are also responsible for the maintenance and release of student records such as transcripts and enrollment verifications; transcript, degree and transfer evaluations; posting degrees and certificates to student transcripts and producing diplomas; certification of eligibility for GI Bill benefits; assisting students in the resolution of registration, fee and grade issues; assisting faculty in meeting mandatory reporting requirements for late enrollment, census certification and positive attendance hours. (EMP A2, D2.4, G3)

Staff have been required to assume new responsibilities and acquire the necessary skills for them as a result of the implementation of the Banner SIS, Luminis portal and a number of other new technologies since 2013. A&R staff currently act as troubleshooters for students, and often for faculty and colleagues in other departments, who are experiencing issues with these systems. They have been tasked with managing Lancerpoint account provisioning, providing “helpdesk” services via phone, email and in person and working closely with district Information Technology Services (ITS) to resolve technical problems impeding students, faculty and their own work. Most of this workload

previously fell to ITS, but with implementation of the new systems it transitioned to A&R. (EMP B2.2, C1, C3, C3.1-C3.3, C4)

Following is the list of recently implemented technologies, innovations, related processes and responsibilities:

Banner SIS, the comprehensive college-wide management information system

Luminis portal (aka Lancerpoint)

Online registration via LancerPoint

CCCApply (XAP version)

Faculty use of LancerPoint to enter final grades, positive attendance hours, pre-census drops and midterm grades

Petition for Graduation online through the PCC website

Electronic transcripts requests to other colleges via Credentials Solutions

Veteran student online reporting via VAOnce

Enrollment verification online through National Student Clearinghouse

College generated ID's converted from social security numbers

Implementation of electronic waitlists

Implementation of add-code authorization numbers during program change period

Department staff also support a variety of campus initiatives through collaboration with other programs and departments; staff provide training for Outreach staff and student ambassadors in the admissions process and use of the online application and student portal; provide additional staff support at the Rosemead Center; collaborate with the Financial Aid office to verify the accuracy of student records for high school graduation status and college standing. Admissions and Records is primarily supported by general fund monies, although certain functions may be eligible for categorical funds from programs such as Student success and Support (SSSP). The department is a revenue center, given that one of its primary purposes is to facilitate the admission and registration of students, which supports the college's primary source of general fund income through the development of FTES (full-time equivalent student hours). Whereas in the past the department also produced small revenue through charges for transcript and enrollment verification issuance, those functions now occur primarily online and the college no longer charges for them.

A&R staff and the Director participate on a variety of campus and district committees and councils, assume leadership roles in a variety of areas such as curriculum and program development, Classified staff representative groups such as the Senate and Union, and the Safe Zone Coalition. Staff generally contribute to the enrichment of the student experience and well-being of students through their participation in a variety of venues and activities on and off campus. (EMP B1, E1)

A&R classified staff is encouraged to participate in the variety of professional development and training opportunities offered by the college, and are released to do so as much as possible. They attend professional development events on- and off-campus, workshops and conferences related to their work and the college environment, including Safe Zone trainings, Emergency Response workshops, Veterans Suicide Prevention Training, the annual WAVES Conference (for GI Bill Certifying Officials), and dirve-in workshops offered by the California Association of Registrars and Admissions Officers (CACRAO). The Director attends a variety of conferences and workshops related to Admissions and Records functions, technological developments and management skills, including annual conferences for CACRAO, CCCApply, and Elive (Ellucian). (EMP B1)

Mission Statement

The Admissions and Records Office is committed to encouraging, supporting and facilitating student access, learning and success for Pasadena City College's diverse population of students and members of the community.

EMP Mission Critical Priorities and Strategies

A1, A2 B1, B2, C1, C3, C4, D2.4, E1, E5, G3, G4

Program Outcomes

SSO #1: Students will be able to utilize online tools to access accurate information, services and resources.

SSO #2: Students will successfully complete the online admissions application.

SSO #3: Prospective, new and continuing students will report experiencing a welcoming and informative experience with Admissions and Records.

Category I. Function

Component A: Services Provided

Provide excellent customer service to students, faculty, staff, administrators and general public.

Interpret, apply and inform students, faculty and staff about federal and state regulations, local policies and procedures as they apply to areas under the Admissions and Records umbrella of responsibility

Provide information and assistance in admission, registration, transcript, degree/certificate, enrollment verification, residency determination, GI bill eligibility verification, grading processes.

Provide assistance with online systems and processes

Process problem online admission applications through Banner, communicate with students to resolve issues and questions

Assist students in petitions process to address exceptional needs and issues.

Assist faculty with reinstatement, online grade and positive attendance hours submission

Determine initial residency status of all students, determine eligibility for residency reclassification, advise students of process and outcomes; advise and assist potential AB540 students

Determine eligibility of military veterans and dependents for GI Bill benefits, certify eligibility to the VA, maintain reporting schedule for drops and unsatisfactory progress, inform veterans/dependents of current academic standing, impact and options; handle annual VA/CSAAVE (state approving agency) audits; work with Fiscal staff to align VA payments with veterans' accounts, approve refunds to the VA, report payment and processing issues to VA.

Process approval of exception requests for official transcripts, enrollment verifications; process manual transcripts and verifications as necessary

Retrieve and print official transcripts received by various transcript services, and in the PCC email account for transcripts.

Scan and index transcripts and other documents for use by counselors and staff in other departments

Review, approve or deny petitions for late enrollment, late withdrawal, course repetition exceptions, reinstatement to class, course substitution, academic reinstatement after dismissal, academic renewal; collaborate with other departments or academic divisions as necessary

Evaluate transcripts for graduation and other purposes as requested by counselors or academic divisions

Evaluate graduation petitions, post degrees and certificates, issue diplomas

Determine course equivalencies using the TES Transfer Equivalency System

Respond to student email inquiries in Lancerpointhelp, enrollme, admissions email accounts and Google Voice voicemail account.

Process applications, registration for Rose Bowl participants in the PCC Marching Band and the Rose Queen and Court (all high school students)

Collaborate with Curriculum and Scheduling Office to facilitate class cancellations and late curriculum changes (all manual processing)

Category II. Institutional Support

Component A: Budget

There are currently 14 full-time classified staff employed in Admissions and Records, and 1 Interim Director of Admissions and Records. The department also employs 4 college assistants and 3 student workers.

Budget and staffing reductions have occurred over several years, causing separate Admissions, Records and Registration functional areas to combine into the current Admissions and Records Office. The position of Dean of Admissions and Records was abolished and replaced by a Director of Admissions and Records; an Assistant Director position was created and subsequently abolished; vacant positions were not filled and one existing staff position was reassigned to the Rosemead site upon its opening. Hourly staff and student workers have been used to compensate for the shortage, which has resulted in student workers being allowed additional functionality in Banner and created a FERPA concern.

Complicating matters is the inundation of new technologies that staff are required to set up, learn to use themselves, troubleshoot and train others to use in a short timeframe. While many basic tasks remain the same, the complexity of executing those tasks has increased substantially. Current staffing would be considered barely adequate to meet the program's needs, but this is also partly due to the restrictions imposed by outdated job descriptions.

Additional full-time or part-time classified staff are needed to assist with dual enrollment processes, incoming transcripts, assistance

Thanks to the increase in new technologies used by the department, staff in A&R are "super users" when it comes to the volume of work they do by computer, and number of programs they may need to use at one time. The current refresh schedule of 5 years is inadequate to provide staff with maximum efficiency and functionality. 3 year refresh is recommended.

Supplies, materials and services have been adequately provided for, but we are advised that substantial funding cuts in these areas will occur in the 2015-16 budget. The department struggles to meet all of its standing obligations, and lacks funding for overtime. Budget is and will continue to be a challenge.

Staff are released to participate in professional development activities as requested providing there is adequate office coverage or the office is allowed to close in support of college-wide professional development events. Additionally, many of the staff should be attending local and regional conferences to stay abreast of their work responsibilities, but the department lacks a budget for conferences and travel.

Component B: Space Allocation Admissions and Records is located in the Student Services Center (L Building), in L113. The building is designed to serve as a one stop shop to provide comprehensive service to students, housing Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, Counseling, Transfer Center, Career Center, EOP&S/Care, DSP&S, Outreach, and CalWorks. The configuration was intended to allow students to obtain student services in a seamless fashion, and create a space for both students and the services to interact with one another. (EMP B2, G4)

The A&R office space provides 15 cubicles and 4 offices, and 4 distinct counter areas for service. One counter space is dedicated to Veterans Services; all other services are delivered through the center counter (most visible from staff desks), with the other two counter areas being used as needed to afford students some privacy when meeting with staff about residency, AB540 and other matters that require discretion. The main counter area is poorly designed in that it is too deep (causing staff to reach across, an ergonomic problem), does not give staff the option of standing or sitting as best suits their individual physical needs, does not provide adequate work surface or space for forms, etc. which contributes to a cramped working area with too many tables and cabinets directly behind staff seating, and does not provide privacy for students when discussing sensitive matters..

Outside the office is a narrow hallway where students must stand in line for service. A&R and Financial Aid share the hallway, and when both offices are at peak activity periods the lines can fill the hallway, making it nearly impassable. The only waiting area with a small bench seat is located directly outside the Veterans Services window.

Doors entering A&R should be kept locked for safety, but they lack windows for staff to see who is asking to come in. Square footage is adequate but the space is poorly designed. It meets current needs but will not be adequate moving forward.

Category III. Accountability

Component A: Internal Accountability

Outcome: SSO #1: Students will be able to utilize online tools to access accurate information, services and resources.

Measure: Surveys were administered to new students to gauge their satisfaction with the Admissions and Records website.

Description of Measure (What data were used to measure the outcome?): Please describe the measure/assessment in detail. What were the components of the measure/assessment? What was the process by which it was developed? Who administered it? Is the data valid and reliable?

The Admissions and Records staff created a survey to be sent to new students who applied to the Fall 2012 semester, to gauge their satisfaction with the Admissions and Records. The survey utilized the following scale to categorize responses:

Unsatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

A total of 628 applicants to the Fall 2012 semester were surveyed via email; 58 responded. The interim Director compiled the responses.

Acceptable Target and Rationale: We anticipated a target positive satisfaction response of 50% based on anecdotal input received about the website.

Ideal Target and Rationale: The ideal target would be 80% as the survey subjects were all first-time PCC students who were new to the college website and environment.

What steps were taken to analyze the data? The interim Director of Admissions and Records compiled the data.

Key/Responsible Personnel (WHO analyzed the data?) Dr. Karen Simian

Summary of Findings:

Results were as follows:

Satisfied – 54%

Neutral – 41%

Unsatisfied – 5%

Results are marginally positive, indicating that the current website may be considered only somewhat satisfactory.

Recommendations for Improvement: Some areas to consider for improvement:

a. Process: Does the way that the service is delivered need to be examined or changed?

b. Organization: Reorganize staff assignments? Improve communications? Modify policies?

c. Collaboration: Work with faculty or staff in other campus units to improve the outcome.

c. Pedagogy: If the support service program has learning outcomes, then do the instructional methods need to be adjusted?

d. Staff member support: Professional development for staff. Make more use of technology or student assistants to allow staff to focus more on professional-level tasks.

- e. Revision of SSOs
- f. Equipment/supplies/space

While the results meet our acceptable target, there is room for improvement. We anticipate that a satisfaction increase of 3% or more in web-related tools will be realized in future surveys due to the implementation of the planned student portal.

We will also revise future surveys to allow for student comments as a way to identify specific areas needing improvement in web tools.

Outcome: SSO #2: Students will successfully complete the online admissions application.

Measure: Students who submitted an application in fall 2012 were sent a survey to gauge their understanding for submitting an online admission application.

Description of Measure (What data were used to measure the outcome?): The Admissions and Records staff created a survey to be sent to new students who applied to the Fall 2012 semester, to gauge their ability to complete the online application process with or without staff assistance. Satisfaction was reported with Yes or No responses.

A total of 628 applicants to the Fall 2012 semester were surveyed via email; 58 responded. The interim Director compiled the responses.

Acceptable Target and Rationale: We hoped for a 70% satisfaction rate based on the testing of the system done by students and the instructions created for the process.

Ideal Target and Rationale: The ideal target would be 95% due to the staff's efforts to assist students, create handouts and station student workers at the registration computers.

What steps were taken to analyze the data?: The interim Director of Admissions and Records compiled the data.

Key/Responsible Personnel (WHO analyzed the data?) Dr. Karen Simian

Summary of Findings: Yes (able to complete the process without staff assistance) – 93%
 No (required staff assistance to complete the process) – 7%

Responses are firmly positive for this small sample, indicating that a majority students are able to navigate the online application process without staff assistance.

However, when compared with results of a centrally-administered anonymous survey such as the Student Satisfaction Survey, the results are somewhat less positive. A sampling of primary A&R processes were rated as above average by PCC students, but leave substantial room for improvement.

Mean Rating	2009	2010	2011	2013
Online Admissions Application Process	2.61	2.58	2.51	3.1
Admissions Office (Application for Admission)	2.54	2.54	2.51	2.94
Online Registration Services	2.62	2.58	2.50	2.99
Records Office (Transcripts)	2.51	2.54	2.49	3.01
Registration Office (Add/Drop, Enrollment)	2.57	2.55	2.51	3.1

Fall 2013-Very Dissatisfied to Very Satisfied – 5 point scale

Recommendations for Improvement: Staff anticipate that implementation of the Banner SIS in 2013 will contribute to increased satisfaction with the online application process.

Communication (emails) from CCCApply should be reviewed by appropriate constituent groups and revised accordingly to deliver clearer direction to students.

Whenever possible, centrally-administered surveys should be used in lieu of paper surveys, or at least online surveys should be used at A&R to capture student feedback.

Reflections/Notes: Future surveys should provide space for open ended answers which would provide more detailed information on how to improve. Surveys should be done more frequently and consistently, or alternative methods of obtaining continuous student input should be developed in order to address student issues and needs as they arise.

External Accountability

Outcome: Admissions and Records complies with state and federal laws, local policy and administrative procedure.

Measure: Audit Results – State-mandated Annual Compliance audit

Audit Results – Federal VA/CSAAVE audit and approval for GI Bill Benefits Certification

Success of A&R procedures and practices established to support regulatory compliance in other departments/programs such as Financial Aid, Counseling/SSSP Services and international Students – gauged by their audit results

Acceptable Target and Rationale: Admissions and Records operations, including GI Bill benefits certifications for military veterans and their dependents, are audited on an annual basis for compliance with state and/or federal law. The only acceptable target is 100%, since the alternative means penalties for the college and for our students.

The state-mandated Annual Compliance Audit addresses the accuracy of A&R procedures for residency determination, census and withdrawal procedures, general registration procedures, appropriate fee charges to students, determination of eligibility for athletic competition (A&R acts as the clearinghouse for audit purposes although decisions are made by staff in the Athletic-Academic Zone), admission and registration of concurrently enrolled students (K-12, CCAP and non-CCAP), records retention, approval of course repetitions and other petitions, the accounting of positive attendance hours and “hours by arrangement”,

Veterans Services are audited by both the Veterans Administration (federal law) and CSAAVE, the state approving agency (California requirements for catalog/program approval) relative to the certification of eligibility for GI Bill benefits. VA files are audited for compliance with fee charges and refund policies (PCC’s and the VA’s), enrollment in eligible programs and compliance with the student educational plan, evaluation of prior course credit, satisfactory academic progress and related suspension activity.

Additionally, A&R procedures are becoming more interdependent with Financial Aid, International Students and Counseling Services as a result of their compliance requirements in areas such as Gainful Employment, determination of financial aid-eligible programs, Student Success and Support Services (SSSP) and SEVIS reporting.

Ideal Target and Rationale: The ideal target is 100% success, for the reasons staged above.

What steps were taken to analyze the data? Review of past audit history.

Annual review of the Contracted District Audit Manual (CCCCO-state mandated compliance); federal Title IV regulatory changes; annual SEVIS regulatory changes; annual VA and CSAAVE regulatory changes; current local policy, procedures and practices.

Key/Responsible Personnel:

Interim Director, Admissions and Records
Director, Admissions and Records
A&R Staff including Veterans Services
Financial Aid Director and Assistant Director
Associate Dean, International Students
Dean, Student Success and Support Services
Lead Counselor

Summary of Findings: The department procedures and practices support compliance with state and federal laws; staff collaborate with other departments and programs to establish procedures and practices that facilitate compliance with federal and state laws that impact those departments.

The A&R portion of PCC's Annual Compliance Audit has yielded no audit findings in the past three years. CSAAVE and VA audit results are consistently positive with no findings.

Results

Acceptable and Ideal Target of 100% met for Admissions & Records Department, based on audit results as stated under Findings.

A&R staff and department procedures are consistently updated to address changes in law as mandated by the California Community Colleges' Chancellor's Office.

Forms and website information is updated on a regular basis to incorporate changes in law and procedure – planned revisions to the website organizational structure should assist students and others in locating accurate information more easily

Veterans Services staff in A&R monitor and ensure compliance with VA and State Approving Agency (CSAAVE) laws and requirements, thus ensuring the college's approval to certify military veterans and dependents for GI Bill benefits.

Veterans Services staff stays abreast of changes in law or procedure required by the VA or CSAAVE relative to GI Bill certifications, informs other staff and recommend necessary changes to policy and procedure.

Veterans Services staff attends the annual WAVES Conference to stay informed of pending changes and to communicate directly with VA representatives.

Veterans Services staff have worked with Fiscal Services to implement procedures and safeguards made necessary to the VA's change in procedures in 2009, wherein they shifted from paying GI Bill benefit recipients directly to paying colleges and making them responsible for all refunds owed to the VA.

Reflections/Notes: There is more than 150 years of combined experience and knowledge in the A&R staff. The individuals in the department are dedicated to the dual purposes of engaging and enriching our students' experiences at PCC and protecting the institution in compliance-related functions within the scope of their responsibilities.