

Cuyamaca Community,

Following the district-wide message sent on November 5th about financial aid fraud, our Vice Presidents and I joined several faculty-led meetings across campus, including the faculty chairs meeting, to share what we know, answer questions, and discuss the changes underway. I appreciate the honest conversations, thoughtful questions, and care for our students and colleagues that you have brought to these discussions. I especially want to thank our department chairs for working so quickly with their deans to make difficult schedule changes. I know how much we asked of you on short notice, and I'm grateful for the care you brought to this work while supporting your colleagues and our students.

I want to share this information with our entire campus, along with my vision for how we schedule our courses moving forward, next steps, and why these

changes are necessary. These shifts are happening quickly, and I know they affect our students, colleagues, programs, and college. As we take on this difficult work together, I am committed to keeping you informed, sharing information as it becomes available, and making space for your questions and continued conversation.

The path forward

As mentioned in the district-wide communication sent on November 5th from Chancellor Neault, Interim President Luster, and me, this fraud is notably different from what we have experienced previously. It involves real people residing in our community, rather than automated bot enrollments. This is a significant and evolving challenge that extends beyond this year, with additional cases continuing to be identified.

In addition, a very large proportion of the fraudulent enrollment identified across our district is occurring through enrollment in classes at Cuyamaca. For this reason, our response has been swift, including moving online courses with high levels of identified fraudulent enrollment to in-person instruction for spring 2027. This includes courses where fraudulent enrollments were successfully identified by faculty and dropped prior to census. Those efforts to identify fraud matter, and they are appreciated.

Impacts for scheduling

The recent financial aid fraud adds to the complexity of our accreditation work on Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) in distance education. We are also navigating how AI affects our ability to verify student participation and assess learning. Together, these issues are shaping how we schedule, deliver, and support instruction.

Beginning with the fall 2027 schedule, in-person instruction will become the default class modality at Cuyamaca. Our goal is to strengthen opportunities for students to learn and connect on campus while maintaining online access where students need it. Fully online, hybrid, and HyFlex sections will be offered when needed to support student access, as determined by the Dean and VPI in consultation with the Chair. Our Vice Presidents, deans, and chairs will work together to develop and review schedules, making adjustments as needed. We are working to create more structured support and guidance for navigating this work and will provide updates as this work progresses.

Supporting quality online instruction

Starting with the fall 2027 schedule, approval of online and hybrid teaching assignments will require verification that instructors meet RSI requirements and college-wide standards for online teaching. We are currently establishing the requirements and standards that, once complete, will serve as the foundation for

our accreditation compliance efforts. Key components under consideration include expanded local RSI guidance and resources, distance education recertification, additional RSI-specific training, and guided peer review of online classes to ensure RSI compliance. We will work through these considerations in partnership with the Academic Senate and faculty, including the institutionalization of the support faculty will need to meet these expectations. This work is critical for accreditation, and to ensure meaningful, responsive, and engaging online learning experiences for our students.

What faculty can do now

Please continue monitoring for patterns that may warrant review, including similar assignment submissions, repeated or unusual similarities in test errors, potentially AI-generated work, and recurring explanations for delayed submissions. Please also be aware of students repeatedly logging into Canvas or clicking through course pages without submitting assignments, participating in discussions, or completing other required coursework. These indicators alone do not establish fraud, but they can help identify concerns that need further review. We should continue to lead with care, recognizing that students may be facing challenges and need support. At the same time, logging into Canvas does not replace participation in coursework. When students remain inactive despite outreach and opportunities to engage, faculty should follow the College's drop policy and the participation expectations outlined in their syllabus. Flexibility can support students who are making progress, but repeatedly extending deadlines without evidence of participation may not help a student succeed.

Students with questions about fraud-related holds should be referred to District Educational Support Services. Only ESS can remove these holds. ESS can be contacted via email at District.Ess@gcccd.edu or by phone at 619.644.7055.

Timely attention to student participation is essential. Faculty should identify and drop inactive students as early as our policies allow. Applying our participation and drop requirements consistently is an important part of maintaining accurate class rosters. Please work with your deans to respond to and report fraudulent activity or enrollment. They are here to support you, help navigate questions or concerns, and work alongside you as we respond to these challenges.

Moving forward together

I know these changes bring real concerns about student access, full-time faculty reaching load, assignments for our part-time colleagues, and enrollment overall. We do expect a decline in enrollment as fraudulent enrollments are removed and schedules change. However, we will be paying close attention to those impacts, and we are committed to making thoughtful decisions as we navigate these changes.

My goal, in partnership with all of you, is to protect the long-term health of Cuyamaca and our ability to serve students. Achieving this will require working together, honest conversations, and a willingness to adjust as we learn. I will continue communicating with the campus, and our VPs, deans, and chairs will share updates as this work progresses.

Please reach out if you need support. Our Vice Presidents and I want to hear your questions and work through them with you.

There will be challenging days ahead, when we feel tired, frustrated, or overwhelmed by the work in front of us. On those days, let's lean on one another for strength and support. The partnerships we have built across our college are our greatest strength, and they will continue to sustain our college, each other, and our students. I believe in Cuyamaca College and the people who give so much of themselves to our students and to each other every day.

We are in this together, and we will emerge stronger because of it. That I know for sure.

In commUNITY,

