Bernadette Black on behalf of Pamela Luster

Outlook

From: Bernadette Black on behalf of Pamela Luster

Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2026 1:24 PM

To:

Subject: Financial Aid Fraud: Our Response and Next Steps at Grossmont College



Dear Grossmont Colleagues,

On November 5, Chancellor Neault, President Robinson, and I shared information about the financial aid fraud affecting our district. Since then, I have met with our Council of Chairs and Coordinators to share what we know, answer questions, and hear concerns about the impact on our students, faculty, and college.

What We Know

The financial aid fraud we are experiencing is different from the automated or "bot" enrollments we have encountered in the past. It involves real individuals, and in some cases, there are concerns that coursework may be completed by someone other than the enrolled student.

This makes the activity more difficult to identify. Students may appear to be participating and making progress even when questions exist about who is completing the work.

The district is working with local and federal authorities and using technology and enrollment data to identify patterns that may not be apparent to individual instructors. The investigation is ongoing, and we expect to learn more.

What This Means for Faculty

Our faculty should continue doing what they do best: teaching, engaging students, assessing learning, and supporting student success.

We do ask faculty to remain attentive to unusual patterns they may encounter through their normal teaching activities, including similarities in assignments, unusual participation patterns, or concerns about whether students are completing their own work.

These patterns are not proof of financial aid fraud. Students may study together, struggle with assignments, use AI inappropriately, or face circumstances that affect their participation. We must be careful not to confuse academic integrity concerns with organized fraud or treat legitimate students with unnecessary suspicion.

If something raises a concern, please share it with your dean and report academic integrity incidents with this Grossmont College Academic Integrity Incident Report form.

Faculty are not expected to investigate. Those responsibilities rest with the district and appropriate authorities.

Student Participation and Our Responsibilities

This situation also reinforces the importance of consistent expectations for student participation.

Faculty must continue following the participation and drop procedures established in their syllabi and college policies. When students stop actively participating, timely action helps maintain accurate rosters and protects the integrity of our enrollment and financial aid processes.

The college will not accept drops on final grade rosters; you must drop students by the W deadline (Sat. Nov 21) or assign a grade.

Students with Fraud-Related Holds

Students with questions about fraud-related holds have been notified and have been referred directly to District Educational Support Services (ESS). Please refer all student to ESS, only ESS can review and remove these holds.

Email: District.Ess@gcccd.edu

Phone: 619-644-7055

Strengthening Our Online Learning Environment

This situation comes as we continue our accreditation work related to Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) in distance education and address the Recommendation for Improvement from our ACCJC Visiting Team.

Financial aid fraud, RSI compliance, and the growing use of artificial intelligence are different challenges, but they raise a common question: How do we ensure students are meaningfully engaged in learning and supported in their success?

In partnership with our Academic Senate, Online Teaching and Learning, Student Services colleagues, faculty, and academic leadership, we will continue strengthening our expectations, professional development, and support for quality online instruction.

Looking Ahead to Spring 2027

As we prepare for spring, we are closely monitoring enrollment patterns, particularly in online courses. We are not making broad changes to our course modalities at this time**.** However, if enrollment patterns or evidence of fraudulent activity warrant additional action, we will consider moving individual sections to in-person or hybrid instruction. Any decisions will be made in consultation with Executive Leadership, Deans and Chairs, with careful consideration of student access, enrollment, and instructional needs.

Our goal is to remain responsive while preserving the flexibility and access our students need.

In closing…

I am grateful to our faculty, classified professionals, administrators, and district colleagues who are responding to these challenges while continuing to serve our students.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the overwhelming majority of our students are here to learn, improve their lives, and achieve their goals. They deserve our trust, encouragement, and support. We also have a responsibility to protect the integrity of our college, our programs, and the public resources entrusted to us.

I believe we can do both.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our students and one another. We will continue sharing information and working collaboratively as this situation evolves.

Dr. Pamela T. Luster

Interim President, Grossmont College

Grossmont College

8800 Grossmont College Drive

El Cajon, CA 92020

(619) 644-7000