

The Successful Registrar

Managing Records,
Systems and Staff

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SNAPSHOTS

NEWS & NOTES

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COVER STORY

Assist, attract transferring students with CollegeFish.org

Whether you work at a two-year or a four-year institution, it's important to support transfer students.

CollegeFish.org is a great tool to assist with advising as students choose transfer destinations and plan their course schedules so that they are ready for their majors.

And it gives four-year institutions a way to reach potential transfer students and keep them up to date on deadlines.

The site has been available to Phi Theta Kappa students for years, but now an improved version is being offered to all students at participating institutions in five pilot states. **Full story, see pages 4–5.**

Support transfers through stages

Transfer students pass through four stages as they make their transition. Learn how to help at every step. **See page 4.**

HIGHLIGHTS

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A faculty member at a community college asked FERPA Doc® Richard Rainsberger for help when he was investigated for a potential FERPA violation. Would your faculty members be able to get the answers they need on campus? **Page 3**

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Support transfer students with comprehensive efforts

Charlene A. Stinard, director of transfer and transition services at the University of Central Florida, leads a small office that handles 75,000 contacts a year. Find out how she helps transfer students make a smooth transition on a budget. **Page 12**

ED issues 'Dear Colleague Letter' on serving service members, veterans

An Executive Order signed by President Barack Obama in April outlines ways institutions can support students who receive military education benefits. The ED issued a "Dear Colleague Letter" explaining how officials can comply with Executive Order 13607, Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Spouses, and Other Family Members.

The guidance covers issues including disclosing costs using a standardized form, providing financial aid information, offering students receiving military benefits a single point of contact at the institution, and more.

You can find the guidance at <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpclatters/GEN1210.html>. ■

Ohio institutions must provide guides for degree completion in 3 years

Offering options that help students complete their degrees in shorter amounts of time could help them accumulate less debt.

An Ohio law requires that public institutions create plans for how students can complete at least 10 percent of their programs within three years, reports the *Dayton Daily News*. The plans, which can include strategies such as taking summer classes, are due by October this year.

By 2014, institutions must provide plans for completing 60 percent of their programs in three years.

However, officials from universities in the state stressed that completing degrees in three years is not the best solution for all students. ■

New proposed regulations ease student loan discharge

The Department of Education has proposed new regulations concerning federal student loans. They apply to income-contingent repayment of loans and make it easier for borrowers with total and permanent disability to have student loans discharged.

Among other provisions, the proposed rules enable loan forgiveness after 20 years rather than 25 if borrowers make payments under an income-contingent repayment plan.

And borrowers with disabilities would be able to request a discharge of all loans with one application.

Review the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-07-17/pdf/2012-15888.pdf. ■

Institutions partner with Coursera to offer free, online courses

Some higher education analysts expect massive open online courses to lead to big changes in the way students learn.

Twelve institutions recently formed partnerships with Coursera, a company founded by two Stanford University professors. Those 12 well-respected universities joined the four original Coursera members, Stanford, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Some of the participating institutions offer completion certificates. And the University of Washington is planning to offer credit for the courses, according to a report in *The New York Times*. Credit students might have to pay a fee and complete extra assignments.

Learn more at www.coursera.org. ■

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Where can faculty get help with FERPA on your campus?

By Richard Rainsberger

“Experience informs us that the first defense of weak minds is to recriminate.”

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“Defend me from my friends; I can defend myself from my enemies.”

— Marshal Claude Louis Hector de Villars, upon taking leave of Louis XIV

“Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”

— Sun-tzu (~400 B.C.)

Sometimes a person needs to know who to turn to for help. Your staff might ask other staff for help with a procedure, policy or question. Faculty might turn to other faculty.

However, sometimes help is not immediately available from your close colleagues or friends, and you may have to look elsewhere. This, in itself, is a lesson to be learned from what I am about to relate.

About a year ago, I received a frantic email from an instructor.

He stated: “I am an associate professor at XXX Community College. I recently let a student help me organize my files. She never saw a final grade. But the school is investigating me for a possible FERPA violation. Please advise.”

After several emails back and forth, the instructor (let’s call him Bill) told me that one of his students offered to help file labs and other papers in folders so that when he figured grades later that week, he would be able to find everything. She wasn’t a work-study student. She was “just helping someone whom she thought needed help,” as Bill said.

He also mentioned that the student hadn’t disclosed anything that she had seen in the records. He further stated that he didn’t try to hide the fact that he had a student helping him because “I thought it was safe as long as there were no grade-book grades shown. I told my supervisor that I would never jeopardize my job by doing something that is a federal offense.”

Bill believed that one of his “friends” (another instructor) saw the student with the files. Instead of discussing what he had seen with Bill, he reported the incident to their supervisor. Bill also mentioned that no one at the college had complained that their FERPA rights were violated.

The administration was conducting a hearing about Bill’s actions. If Bill was found to have violated a federal law, his teaching load would be reduced by two teaching sections for a semester. This would

result in a \$600 monthly loss of salary, which, Bill admitted, he could not afford. He was asking me for help.

As he summarized, “This student was helping me organize my files so I could go home and enter them in the grade book. She had no interest in anyone’s grades. She may have inadvertently seen some grades on individual tests. But the intent was to organize my files.”

Administrators were considering reducing his teaching load, so Bill wanted to make his case with confidence. He stressed that he would have never let the student help if he thought he would get in trouble and that no student ever saw a final grade in his grade book. “I hate feeling like a criminal. My students love and respect me,” he concluded.

During our long-distance conversations, I asked Bill how he found me. He said that he had learned about me from an article I had written “about the 2002 Supreme Court ruling.” (It was the September 2010 FERPA Doc column on the *Owasso v. Falvo* case, which the Supreme Court decided in 2002.)

Bill needed answers quickly. He believed that he had done nothing wrong. The thrust of my *Owasso v. Falvo* column, he thought correctly, was that graded tests/labs did not become subject to FERPA until they were recorded in the grade book.

But was this the only argument he could make? In preparing his defense, he needed all the ammunition he could get. Instead of turning to someone on campus, he turned to someone who was many hundreds of miles away. He needed an advocate and he didn’t have one on campus.

But why hadn’t he discussed his FERPA protections with anyone at his college? What does Bill’s case say about the current state of FERPA education on our campuses? And did Bill violate FERPA? Did he lose two teaching sections and \$600 per month as a result? We’ll answer those questions next month. ■

The FERPA Doctor®

Richard Rainsberger, a former registrar, is a nationally recognized authority on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Contact him at ferpadoc@hotmail.com. ■

Encourage community college students to prepare for a smooth transfer with CollegeFish.org

Students who transfer need to plan carefully to ensure that their courses will count toward their degrees. And their transfer will go more smoothly if they have completed the prerequisites for their majors.

CollegeFish.org provides online tools to help community college students decide where to go next and to prepare for a successful transfer experience.

The tool was designed for students in Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for two-year college students. But with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, it is being expanded and offered to students at all community colleges that choose to participate in five pilot states. The updated website launches in September, with services being offered in Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky and Washington.

CollegeFish.org benefits community colleges by providing a comprehensive advising tool. Before the economic downturn and enrollment surge at two-year institutions over the past few years, less than one-third of community college students spoke with a counselor, said Rod Risley, executive director of PTK.

“The percentage of students receiving essential advisement and support for college completion is even less today, thus CollegeFish.org is meeting a critical need in regard to degree completion at a time when credentials are often essential for jobs,” Risley said.

Four-year institutions that sign on as partners can use CollegeFish.org to share information about what they offer. The system also provides them with contact information for students who express interest in their institution.

After students fill out a profile, CollegeFish.org suggests institutions they might want to attend. They can compare institutions on factors such as class size, said Jennifer Blalock, CollegeFish.org director.

They can also use calculator tools to determine how much a particular institution will cost. It might not occur to students that they will have to pay for parking or student IDs that might have been free at the community college, Blalock said. They also may not realize that books are likely to be more expensive for the junior and senior years, she said.

Students can save up to 10 institutions in their “fishbowl.”

Once they have selected possible institutions,

students can create a transfer success plan. They input courses they have taken and get feedback on what they need to take for particular majors. Transfer and articulation agreements that have been established between the two-year and four-year institutions are built into the system.

“Pell students have little room for error,” Blalock said. Every course they take needs to be applicable to their degree, she added. And many community college students rely on the Pell program.

When students create their profiles, they include the dates they expect to transfer. The tool provides them with three steps at a time to achieve their goals. Once they complete those steps, they see new ones.

Four-year institutions can populate students’ calendars with important dates. For example, if a student expresses interest in a particular university, that institution’s application deadline and other key dates appear on the calendar. ■

‘We give people hope. [CollegeFish.org] allows people to extend that hope beyond what they can do at a community college.’

— Ed Hughes, President and Chief Executive Officer, Gateway Community and Technical College

Support transfer students through 4 stages

The process transfer students go through consists of four stages, said Jennifer Blalock, director of CollegeFish.org. Be sure your institution is ready to support them through these stages:

1. Search. Students at two-year institutions should start exploring their transfer options during their first semester of enrollment, Blalock said.

2. Choose. Students create academic and financial plans so they are ready for a smooth transition.

3. Secure. Students develop relationships that will help them succeed in their transfer goals. They identify professionals at their current and future institution who can answer their questions.

4. Succeed. Students learn to understand the culture at their new institution and identify the supports available to them. The same strategies that helped them navigate a two-year institution might not work at a university. For example, they might not be able to participate in six clubs, but joining one club can help them make the connections that will help them. ■

Learn why officials are excited about CollegeFish.org

Members of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for community college students, have been enjoying the advantages of CollegeFish.org for years. This fall, all students at participating institutions in five states have access to the transfer-planning tool. Below is why institution officials are enthusiastic about the pilot.

Site supports strategic goals

In Kentucky, offering CollegeFish.org to all community college students supports the statewide goal of increasing the number of college graduates, said Ed Hughes, president and chief executive officer at Gateway Community and Technical College.

When Hughes heard about the CollegeFish.org pilot, he asked PTK officers at his college about the tools available and learned they were all using the service to plan their transfers. Once they gave him a tutorial, he was eager to offer CollegeFish.org to all students. Gateway is a young, quickly growing institution that has only recently begun to focus on preparing students for transfer, Hughes said.

In Kentucky as a whole, community colleges are the key to increasing college completion, Hughes said. The state's college-going rate and the value placed on higher education have been low, he said. But with a community college within a half-hour drive of anyone in the state, the colleges offer students a chance to get started. CollegeFish.org helps them keep going.

"We give people hope," Hughes said about the community college system. "This allows people to extend that hope beyond what they can do at a community college. That's pretty powerful stuff," he said.

System offers complete information

Many students make the decision about where to transfer based on one or two factors without considering the whole picture, said Cheryl Cephus-Vickers, dean for student services and director of counseling and advising at Gadsden State Community College. With CollegeFish.org, they can make choices based on more comprehensive data, she said.

Alabama colleges already use a program that provides transfer information about institutions in the state. CollegeFish.org will help students with choices in other states, she said.

Gadsden State will have an on-campus coordinator for CollegeFish.org efforts. Officials are planning an icon on the institution's homepage to take students to the website. They also hosted an information table about the new system at orientation sessions where they offered games and prizes to promote it. They also included information in new student packets.

New students take an orientation class, and information about how to use CollegeFish.org to plan a transfer is being added to that course, Cephus-Vickers said.

System provides new options

Heather Owen, director of recruitment and PTK advisor at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College in Alabama, has seen the positive results PTK students get from using CollegeFish.org for several years.

It gives students a way to find out about institutions outside the state and even outside the country that they might never have considered attending, she said. Many students don't have a plan for transfer when they enroll. CollegeFish.org helps them develop one so that they can get organized and transfer successfully, she said.

Students who have used it also liked that they received a lot of contact from the institutions they chose as possible transfer destinations. That made them feel welcome, Owen said.

Owen, who directs orientation, showed all new students how to use the system. She borrowed a banner promoting CollegeFish.org that she saw at the national PTK convention and displayed it at orientation to get students excited. Each student will have a log-in to use the service, Owen said.

She hopes that officials at four-year institutions will see the value of using CollegeFish.org as a recruitment tool. Publicizing scholarships available for transfer students would attract students, Owen added. ■

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Support academic progress policies with automation

At many institutions, students who complete bachelor's degrees in four years are the exception rather than the norm. At California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo, increasing numbers of students enroll for fifth and sixth years. In some cases, they earn many more credits than they need to graduate, said Helen Bailey, assistant registrar. She spoke at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers annual meeting.

As admission to the institution became increasingly competitive, officials decided they needed to encourage students to graduate on time to make room for incoming students, Bailey said.

They created a new Expected Academic Progress policy and technology to help implement it. The policy requires students to be on a four-year plan to graduation, and they do not have the option to take extra classes to stay in school longer. "It's a very big culture change. Students no longer are in control," Bailey said.

The EAP policy applies to students who entered beginning in fall 2010, Bailey said.

Its main points include:

- **Full-time students are expected to make specific progress toward their degree each year.** They should complete 20 percent of required units by the end of the first year, 45 percent by the end of the second year, 75 percent by the end of the third year, and 100 percent by the end of the fourth year.

- **Students who graduate on time have no cap on the number of units they can take.** Those who do not graduate on time may complete no more than 24 units above the number required for the degree.

If they exceed that number, a hold might be placed on their registration or they might be put on administrative academic probation. Plus they will be required to submit a degree-completion plan that must include only degree-applicable courses.

- **Failure to make reasonable academic progress may result in a hold being placed on the student's registration.** Or the student might be placed on administrative academic probation.

- **Transfer students have three years to complete their degrees.** They must complete 55 percent of units by the end of their first year, 80 percent by the end of their second year, and 100 percent by the end of their third year.

Officials created an Expected Academic Progress report that runs on the PeopleSoft degree audit system. It shows, in gas-gauge format, how far along students are toward their degree, Bailey said.

When students reach 75 percent completion, the institution sends them an email telling them they are on track to graduate in a year.

Whereas students previously had to apply to graduate, officials now apply on their behalf. The goals are to make the graduation process more structured and automatic and to help students avoid unpleasant surprises, Bailey said.

The Registrar's Office also uses the analysis to help provide departments with information about what courses they might need to offer to ensure that students can complete their degrees, Bailey said.

Review the policy at <http://catalog.calpoly.edu/2011cat/acadstds.pdf>. ■

Grant more certificates with automated process

When students earn certificates in the process of completing degree requirements, they don't always realize they have finished a credential. But having the certificate in hand could give them the encouragement to complete the degree or the qualification they need to land a job.

At Elgin Community College in Illinois, officials created a program to identify students who completed certificates. Once final grades for a term are entered, they run the program and typically identify several hundred certificate completers who didn't apply to receive the credential.

The students often don't realize they completed the certificate until they receive it in the mail, said Ann King, assistant registrar. She spoke at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers annual meeting.

The program was written in-house to work with the

institution's Datatel system, said Jennifer McClure, managing director of enrollment services, in a follow-up interview.

Officials admit that the program has some limitations. "But it's worth the effort," King said. It takes about 72 hours to run, so McClure usually runs it over a weekend — ideally a long holiday weekend — and consults with the IT department first to make sure the process won't interfere with other programs.

Sometimes the program identifies students who don't qualify for certificates, so McClure goes through the report to verify the information. For example, some students on the report don't have high enough GPAs or they have too much transfer credit for the certificates.

And at times the program misses students who completed certificates, but they can apply to receive the credentials. ■

Adopt best practices to help students avoid default, ensure programs meet Gainful Employment standards

A federal judge recently overturned one of the three criteria for evaluating programs that are covered by the Gainful Employment regulations. Judge Rudolph Contreras ruled that the requirement that at least 35 percent of students must be repaying their loans was arbitrary.

What steps the Department of Education will take next regarding the Gainful Employment regulations is unclear.

But institution officials should continue their efforts to ensure that their programs are compliant with the standards and to help students prevent student loan default, said Haley Chitty, director of communications for the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Those efforts will make your institution stronger, Chitty said.

"None of that work will be a waste of time down the road," said Karen McCarthy, policy analyst for NASFAA. That's because it supports student success and retention, she added.

The gainful employment measures apply only to some vocational and certificate programs that lead to employment in specific professions. But the same strategies that help programs qualify for federal financial aid under the regulations can help prevent student loan default in any type of program. Make sure you do the following to support student success:

- **Promote responsible borrowing.** That begins with teaching basic financial literacy, Chitty said. Students should understand the risks of borrowing and know what is a reasonable amount to borrow. "Counseling early and often" is important, he said.

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Consult these references for Gainful Employment information

A variety of resources can help you keep up with the latest developments and requirements on gainful employment. Consult the following sources to learn more:

- <http://ifap.ed.gov/GainfulEmploymentInfo/index.html>. The U.S. government provides information and links to resources.

- www.nasfaa.org/advocacy/News/Gainful_Employment_Informational_Debt_Measures_Released.aspx. NASFAA offers a Q&A about the regulations.

To help your students avoid default, access these resources:

- www.ifap.ed.gov/DefaultManagement/DefaultManagement.html.
- <http://ifap.ed.gov/DefaultPreventionResourceInfo>.
- <http://ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/ANN1218.html>. ■

Targeting counseling to students who might be at risk of borrowing too much or dropping out is a good strategy, he added.

Students who don't finish are the most likely to default on loans, McCarthy said.

- **Assist at-risk students.** Target additional grant aid to students who need it the most, Chitty said. That can cut down on borrowing and help students stay enrolled, he said.

- **Provide effective academic counseling.** When students take six years to complete their degrees, they rack up more debt than if they finished in four, McCarthy said.

- **Coordinate efforts across campus.** The financial aid office and academics need to work together to ensure that students complete degrees without unreasonable debt, Chitty said.

- **Focus efforts on factors within your control.** Institutions are not responsible for the downturn in the economy. But students have many options to prevent default on federal loans, Chitty said. Provide effective counseling so that students understand what those options are.

- **Make sure your reporting is accurate.** When the ED recently released its list of programs that did not meet the Gainful Employment metrics, officials from some institutions thought a mistake had been made. You don't want to improve on student success but then misreport your data, McCarthy said. ■

Encourage professional development through self-coaching

By Howard M. Guttman

To groom the next generation of registrars in lean times, consider the cost-effective self-coaching approach. When individuals coach themselves, they take responsibility for their personal growth.

To launch a self-coaching program:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This regular feature provides you with guidance to help you sharpen your management skills.

- Ensure campus leaders and HR professionals understand the process so they can guide interested staffers.

- Identify likely candidates among high-potential staffers.

- Work with individuals or hold workshops for your entire team or with other units.

- Schedule follow-up meetings to share lessons learned and support.

- To identify candidates for self-coaching, look for willingness to drop defenses and become vulnerable in an effort to improve. Remember that those not willing to make profound changes aren't candidates for self-coaching.

Self-coaching programs have mentors and candidates work through these seven steps, with candidates responding to key questions:

1. Determine your self-coachability. Am I able, ready and willing to change my behavior permanently?

Tell candidates they have been invited to participate because of their potential as future leaders.

Then help them determine if they're able to self-coach by having them answer a series of questions you can find on www.coachyourselftowin.com. (You must register to access the free materials.)

2. Select intention. What is my ultimate goal or intention? It's a deliberate choice. Mentors serve as a sounding board during this step.

3. Identify supporters. Who can provide support and insight about my behavior? Who will be honest?

Those coaching themselves often need help selecting mentors and co-workers on campus for this. You could be the perfect guide or support circle member.

4. Solicit feedback. What can these people tell me about my behavior and how to change or what I have to do to move to the next level?

They must assure co-workers that candid feedback will be valued and acted on. Help them understand how to gather feedback by checking out our website.

5. Analyze, respond to feedback. What's the message these people are giving me and how will I respond? Help those coaching themselves view feedback as a gift, not a threat.

6. Develop a game plan. What actions will I take and when? Support staffers in crafting a realistic personal development plan in writing with time lines.

7. Track success. Am I accomplishing my goals? If not, how can I get back on track? How will I know when I've reached my goals? Encourage those coaching themselves to stay on track.

Howard M. Guttman is principal of Guttman Development Strategies, Inc. This article was adapted from one published in Leader to Leader, Vol. 2012, Issue 63.

For more, see www.wiley.com and input the journal name in the search engine. ■

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How would you support work-life balance?

You have excellent staff members who

Case Study

have been with your office for many years. As demands on the office have increased but funding hasn't, you have had to ask more from them.

The Solution

Consider flex time, extra compensation; work alongside staff

Robin Knight, registrar at Georgia Military College, has a few staff members who are hit hard with seasonal requirements.

"During these periods, I often require extra hours. I offset these times by allowing/encouraging them to take long weekends once the crunch has passed," Knight said.

Also, Knight never requires more of her staff than she is willing to put in herself. If they work late on a project, she stays to work with them. "This emphasizes my appreciation for the job they do and lets them know we are all part of a team and no member's duties count more than others," Knight said.

Eve Dauer, registrar at Walden University, would attempt to determine from the employee's perspective what might help, and then she might put forth the following options:

1. Flexing the employee's hours to assist with her personal responsibilities. For example, if the employee needs to take her mother to physical therapy every Monday morning, then Dauer might offer that the employee take Monday mornings off in exchange for working on Saturday mornings. Working on a Saturday might provide the employee with a few hours of quiet

They have told you that they are proud of their contributions, but the extra demands are making work-life balance almost impossible for them. They would like some options to make their work hours more flexible.

What would you do?

time to concentrate more fully and accomplish more in that period of time.

2. Working from home. If the employee's work can be structured so that it can be accomplished from home one day a week, it would save time spent on morning preparations and travel time to the office. Working from home, even one day a week, can have a positive psychological effect on the employee.

3. Offering overtime or a stipend. While there might not be enough in the budget to hire another staff member, there might be enough budgeted to occasionally offer a staff member overtime or a stipend.

4. Providing unscheduled release time when possible. Knowing that the staff member has increased demands on her time, Dauer might attempt to provide the occasional unscheduled release time if there is a lull in the workload. For example, on a Friday afternoon before a long holiday weekend without much activity, she might let the employee leave a few hours early.

Michael George, university registrar at the University of Alabama, would first research flextime. He would then consult with the campus counsel and human resources to ensure he fully understood his options and any legal, regulatory barriers that could influence his decision and chosen course of direction.

George would then discuss this issue with his boss, the vice provost. He would make sure his actions would not be precedent-setting with respect to other divisions within Academic Affairs, possibly creating turmoil. Presuming the vice provost supported flextime, George would then want to discuss the issue with his assistant and associate registrars to determine whether the office could adopt some form of flextime and continue to serve its stakeholders without any degradation in service.

Next, George would form a task force composed of wage and salaried staff and challenge them to devise a policy and implementation plan. This document would also need to address oversight responsibilities. Once the final plan and protocol had been approved internally, he would run it back through the Office of Counsel and HR just to be safe before implementing. ■

For October ...

Students come to your office to withdraw from the institution. You have spoken with several of them recently who said they had decided to drop out because they didn't want to take on any more debt.

They didn't have immediate plans for their futures and were unhappy about not continuing their educations. You wonder if your institution could do more to help these students find solutions.

How would you handle this situation?



Send your responses or problem situations to Joan Hope, editor, at jhope@wiley.com.

AT A GLANCE

A REVIEW OF THIS MONTH'S
LAWSUITS & RULINGS**FERPA**

- Eligible students do not have the right to changes in grades or other evaluations 10

Dismissal

- Poor performance, rather than discrimination, kept a student out of dental school 10

Disability

- An institution agrees to re-enroll a student with dyslexia and change his grade 11

FERPA

FERPA right to amend does not apply to accurate records

Case name: *Letter to: Anonymous parent* (FPCO 12/15/09).

Ruling: The Family Policy Compliance Office determined that a school district did not violate the complainant's rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act when it refused to expunge certain records.

What it means: FERPA's amendment provision does not apply to substantive decisions made by school or higher education officials, such as grades or other student evaluations. It is intended to require only that educational institutions conform to fair recordkeeping practices.

Summary: The FPCO responded to an attorney's complaint letter on behalf of a client who claimed that her rights under FERPA were violated when her son's school district refused to amend his education records.

The agency explained that FERPA affords parents and eligible students the opportunity to seek amendment of education records when the information is inaccurate or misleading. A school must consider the request for amendment, inform the parent or eligible student of its decision, and, if the request is denied, advise the requester that she has the right to a hearing.

If, as a result of a hearing, the institution decides not to amend the record, then the parent or eligible student has the right to insert a statement in the record setting forth his views.

After an investigation, the agency found that the records the parent wished to expunge were accurately

recorded by the school district. Therefore, FERPA's amendment provision did not apply to this request. ■

DISMISSAL

Lawful reason for student's dismissal refutes retaliation claim

Case name: *Letter to: University of Illinois at Chicago*, No. 05-112107 (OCR 08/02/11).

Ruling: The Office for Civil Rights concluded that although the University of Illinois at Chicago discriminated against a student by denying her necessary auxiliary aids, it did not retaliate against her after she complained to the institution's Office for Access and Equity.

What it means: To establish a retaliation claim, a postsecondary student must provide evidence that (1) he engaged in protected activity; (2) the institution knew of this activity; (3) the institution took adverse action directed at the student at the same time or after the protected activity; and (4) a connection between the protected activity and the adverse action could be inferred.

Summary: OCR investigated a student's allegation that she was subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability (dyslexia) when she was enrolled in the Urban Health Post Baccalaureate Program of the University of Illinois' College of Dentistry.

The Post Baccalaureate Program provided a select number of unsuccessful urban applicants to the dental college an opportunity to improve their test scores and strengthen their academic background in the sciences. Applicants who successfully completed the program were admitted to the dental college for the following year.

Soon after failing an exam, the complainant requested academic adjustments for her dyslexia. But at the end of the semester, she was dismissed from the program because she earned an F in anatomy and a D in biochemistry.

She filed a discrimination complaint with the Office for Access and Equity, asserting that necessary academic adjustments were not provided.

As a result, she was allowed to re-enroll with reasonable auxiliary aids and extra lab time. Her failing grades were removed. However, the complainant received the lowest grade among the 11 participants for two sections of the program and was not offered admission to the dental college.

She claimed that she was denied admission in retaliation for filing complaints with the OAE.

But OCR concluded that the university had a lawful reason for its action. As a result, OCR concluded that

the complainant was not subjected to discrimination. However, it found that the university had denied her appropriate academic adjustments and auxiliary aids when she first enrolled. The university resolved this noncompliance issue by entering into a resolution agreement through which it offered the complainant another opportunity to enroll. ■

DISABILITY

University agrees to re-enroll student and provide accommodations

Case name: *Letter to: University of Chicago, No. 05-10-2189 (OCR 06/09/11).*

Ruling: The University of Chicago entered into a resolution agreement with the Office for Civil Rights to resolve a student's disability discrimination complaint.

What it means: Colleges and universities must engage in an interactive process with students with disabilities to determine the appropriate academic adjustments and auxiliary aids needed by each student.

Summary: OCR investigated a student's complaint alleging his dismissal from the University of Chicago constituted discrimination on the basis of disability. The complainant asserted that he was placed on probation and later dismissed because, despite his repeated requests, the university failed to provide him with reasonable academic adjustments and auxiliary aids.

He also alleged that UC improperly applied its Academic Regulations and Procedures policy when

it placed him on probation and dismissed him.

The university requested to resolve the complaint before OCR finished its investigation by entering into a resolution agreement that addressed the noncompliance issues asserted by the student.

The university agreed to inform the student in writing that he could re-enroll for the following quarter as a second-year student and that the conditions stipulated in his academic dismissal letter as preconditions for his re-enrollment were no longer in effect.

UC also agreed to reinstate his financial aid on the same terms and conditions that applied when it was first awarded.

The university agreed to engage in the interactive process with him to clarify his request for academic adjustments and modifications and to inform him in writing of its determination regarding the academic adjustments and modifications that would be provided.

Finally, the university agreed to amend the student's official transcript to remove the Incomplete-F he earned for a math class and allow the student to retake the math placement exam. If the exam showed that he could be placed in a calculus-level class, he would not have to retake the original math class.

OCR advised that it would monitor the implementation of the agreement to ensure that all its terms were fulfilled. ■

LAWSUITS & RULINGS

This regular feature summarizes recent court or agency records of interest to registrars.

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CHARLENE A. STINARD, DIRECTOR OF TRANSFER AND TRANSITION SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Provide comprehensive support to transfer students

More than 11,000 transfer students enroll at the University of Central Florida each year, so Charlene A. Stinard and her staff have a big job ensuring that they make the transition smoothly. She's director of transfer and transition services.



CHARLENE A. STINARD

With a small staff, Stinard's office has met the needs of UCF's rapidly growing transfer student population with an innovative peer mentor program.

Rather than merely being campus ambassadors, the peers are trained advisors who are able to discuss prerequisites and major requirements with prospective and incoming transfer students. They also lead orientation.

"The model is really powerful," Stinard said. For institutions facing budget cuts that prevent staffing from keeping up with growth, peer mentoring can fill the gap, she added. And peer mentors gain many transferable professional skills, Stinard said.

Overall, the office engages in about 70,000 contacts a year. Many of them are with potential transfer students, and staff members and peer mentors work with them to make sure they are academically ready when they transfer. Most of the students transfer with associate degrees from four partner institutions. They are guaranteed admission to UCF with those degrees.

TTS officials advise them to choose a major and take the prerequisites for it while they are earning their AAs.

When students transfer, they attend a mandatory day-long orientation. The sessions typically include about 550 students and 175 parents, Stinard said. The students meet with academic advisors and register during the orientation, she said.

Stinard has changed the orientation program in the past few years because of feedback peer mentors have given. For example, officials now spend less time on policies and procedures. "Everyone is on information overload," Stinard said.

Instead, staff and mentors spend more time helping incoming students make personal connections so that they will feel comfortable asking for help later. The incoming students leave orientation with a business card for the office and instructions to call for any type of help they need.

The peer mentors also present a session on transfer shock. Coming from a smaller campus to UCF,

which has about 54,000 students, can be a challenge.

The peers also created the Transfer Knights Club, which offers a series of workshops each semester to engage transfer students in the campus community. Transfer students often get stuck in the "iron triangle" of classroom, apartment and work, Stinard said. They have the idea that if they come to campus for events, they won't know anyone. But everyone else there will have been at the institution since their freshman year and will be friends.

The peer mentors are all transfer students, and Stinard starts recruiting for the next group at orientation. She tries to hire seven or eight, and by the end of the first month of classes, the group is often down to five. The hardest part of managing the program is recruiting male students, she said.

They work 10 hours a week at the federal minimum wage, she said.

The peers receive extensive training and are tested on their knowledge. Stinard developed a rubric to assess their advising skills with the help of professionals in the assessment office and the Center for Teaching and Learning. Each stage of training has very specific learning outcomes, she said. For example, mentors need to be able to explain the five areas of general education and be able to conduct a degree audit.

Email Charlene A. Stinard at Charlene.Stinard@ucf.edu. ■

Use these tips to get the most from a peer mentor program

Peer mentors for the University of Central Florida's Transfer and Transition Services advise prospective and incoming students. If student-workers could help your unit meet demands, consider these strategies:

✓ **Be selective about hiring.** UCF's peer mentors must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA. And they must be transfer students so that they understand the issues they are helping students address.

✓ **Provide effective training.** TTS offers training modules and tests the mentors. Officials also use a rubric to assess peers' effectiveness as advisors.

✓ **Enable peers to develop a range of skills.** TTS mentors' work includes counseling, event planning and public speaking.

✓ **Assess the effectiveness of efforts.** TTS assesses its programs annually and values input from peers for improving services. ■