

Role of Paraprofessionals Task Force

(Appointed by the Academic Senate)

Fall 2014

The Task:

The task force was formed in response to ASCCC Resolution 8.01, Counselors as Discipline Experts, in which the resolution resolved to “strongly encourage local senates to work collaboratively and collectively with their local bargaining unit to prevent the improper appropriation of subject matter expertise and the roles and responsibilities legally reserved for Counseling Faculty to non-faculty paraprofessional advisors.”

Colleges continue to hire paraprofessionals without regard to guidelines outlined in the 2008 paper (or subsequent resolutions) approved by the statewide Academic Senate calling for colleges to adhere to the principles set forth in both the 2012 Role of Counseling Faculty in California Community Colleges and the Standards of Practice for CCC Counseling Faculty and Programs adopted papers. The “core functions” of Counseling Faculty are detailed in the Standards paper (2008) and have not changed over the past thirty years. The task force was to discuss and research if there was any overlap with current paraprofessional positions and Counseling Faculty roles (“improper appropriation of subject matter expertise”) occurring at Mt. SAC, and to provide solutions and recommendations.

The task force reviewed ASCCC literature on Counselors as Discipline Experts, including the ASCCC adopted papers titled, Standards of Practice for California Community College Counseling Faculty and Programs, adopted Spring 1997 and revised and adopted Fall 2008 and The Role of Counseling Faculty and Delivery of Counseling Services in the California Community Colleges, adopted Fall 1994, revised and adopted Spring 2012. Both papers were also supported by Mt. SAC’s Academic Senate. In addition to these papers, the committee reviewed Education Code, Title 3, Division 7, part 45, Chapter 6, Article 2, Counseling Services in which the duties and responsibilities of Counseling Faculty are outlined and an article published by ASCCC on “When Are Counseling Paraprofessionals Appropriate? A Friendly Reminder.”

The task force then reviewed Mt. SAC’s Student Services (Counseling) paraprofessional job announcements and discussed how paraprofessionals are utilized in the counseling discipline at Mt. San Antonio College.

The Problem

Paraprofessionals can support Counseling Faculty and students just as instructional assistants help Instructional Faculty in the classroom, provided paraprofessionals are performing functions within the scope of their defined roles. Paraprofessionals may be performing functions outside the scope of their

defined roles. How does Mt. SAC change this practice for future hiring of paraprofessionals? “How to best address the problem at the college?”

Issues:

- 1) A need to prevent the improper appropriation of subject matter expertise and the roles and responsibilities legally reserved for Counseling Faculty to non-faculty paraprofessional advisors
- 2) Discrepancies found within paraprofessional hiring practices reinforce the importance of identifying the primary role of the paraprofessional within CCC Counseling Departments. Mt. SAC’s previous Educational Advisors job notices clearly include tasks beyond that of a paraprofessional (ex. “Assists students with developing a career choice based upon educational background, occupational interest, and personal objectives.”)
- 3) There are educational advisors in different areas/departments. Can any department request an Educational Advisor position at Mt. SAC? If so, how can we ensure quality without quality controls and training to provide the best service for our students?
- 4) There is no statewide definition of, or limitations on, the role of Counseling/Advising paraprofessionals, and as such, some districts are replacing Counseling Faculty with Counseling/Advising paraprofessionals
- 5) The new Title 5 language 55524 (Student Education Plan) does not specify who is responsible for the provision of SEP’s
- 6) Paraprofessionals may have absorbed or been given additional duties previously performed by Counseling Faculty

Recommendations/Possible Solutions:

The task force recognizes that there is a long history of the use of counseling paraprofessionals at Mt. SAC. During this period of time, it is apparent that there is overlap with current paraprofessional positions and Counseling Faculty roles. It is not the intention of the task force to try and change current paraprofessional job descriptions, but rather only to provide direction for the future hiring of paraprofessional positions. The following recommendations are to be viewed as possible solutions for moving forward.

It is recommended that the college district:

- 1) In collaboration with the Faculty Association and CSEA, develop contract language that defines the role and scope of persons in future paraprofessional positions, including the uses and restrictions of paraprofessionals in the delivery of counseling services
- 2) Ensure that training and supervision responsibilities of paraprofessionals are clearly defined, and are conducted with Counseling Faculty taking an active role in both (Standards Paper, 2008 and Role Paper, 2012)
- 3) Ensure that Counselors remain the discipline subject matter experts
- 4) Ensure that professional counseling services are not being provided by paraprofessionals (Role Paper, 2012, Adopted by Mt. SAC’s Academic Senate)

- 5) Ensure that there is no unilateral transfer of work between classifications – it is unlawful
- 6) Clarify roles between Counseling Faculty and paraprofessionals
- 7) Define the minimum responsibilities of paraprofessionals as stated in Title 5.
- 8) Ensure that paraprofessionals are not expected to perform tasks and activities that go beyond their qualifications and scope of their jobs (Standards Paper, 2008, Role Paper, 2012)
- 9) Establish a process for hiring educational advisors, vetted through the Counseling Department, (to provide quality training), thereby ensuring the best possible service to students

Respectfully submitted,

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