

3.01 F21: Oxnard College Academic Senate Resolution in Support of Immediately Approving a Remote and/or Hybrid Work Model for Counselors

Whereas, It is the responsibility of VCCCD Administration and each Board of Trustee Member to immediately approve a Remote and/or Hybrid Work Model; Employees have effectively worked remotely for the past 18 months without any risk to students and/or employee health. Working on campus during this pandemic unnecessarily exposes both students and employees to COVID-19. The inflexibility for a remote/hybrid model has resulted in the loss of valuable members of the OC counseling team as well as many hours of counseling services each week. This is negatively impacting the wait times for students receiving counseling services. Positive COVID-19 cases have already negatively impacted service to students over the first three weeks of the fall 2021 semester. Several counselors in EOPS, General Counseling, CalWORKs, University Transfer Center, and Career Center were exposed and as a result, these centers had to shut down. Counselors underwent testing and, in the meantime, transitioned to working from home. This took much time and resources. Students from all of these centers were turned away or had their appointments cancelled. If a rotation, such as in a hybrid model was in place, fewer personnel would have been exposed, and personnel not exposed could have continued serving students the following day.

Whereas, It is the responsibility of VCCCD Administration and each Board of Trustee Member to provide a safe work environment for Students and Employees; currently, working conditions are unsafe. There has been a lack of structure and personnel within counseling spaces as social distancing and capacity restrictions have been non-existent. The CDC identifies a person exposed to COVID-19 as any individual who has been within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more of a person infected with COVID-19. Counseling offices do not permit for distancing more than six feet, and counseling sessions do not conclude in less than fifteen minutes. In fact, most counseling meetings are slotted between 30- 45 minutes. Counselors are mandated to be exposed to COVID-19 with no limitation nor regard especially since many students may be asymptomatic. Several counselors have already been infected COVID-19 even after having been fully vaccinated. Also, COVID-19 testing should have been implemented at all sites prior to the return to campus and each week thereafter as students and employees may be asymptomatic when checking in via the MyVCCCD App. These items should have been addressed over the previous 18 months of remote work and prior to the mandated return to campus.

Whereas, It is the responsibility of VCCCD Administration and each Board of Trustee Member to monitor the COVID-19 Pandemic carefully and not risk student and employee health. The VCCCD Administration and Board of Trustee Members prematurely mandated a return to campus amidst a surge in the more severe COVID-19 Delta variant. Support Services and safety have and will continue to be negatively impacted and reduced due to mandated quarantine, thus resulting in a decline of services offered to students and a larger workload for employees working on campus. Moreover, data suggests COVID-19 cases will continue to rise as flu season approaches whether students and employees are vaccinated or not.

Whereas, It is the responsibility of VCCCD Administration and each Board of Trustee Member to review data and metrics to better understand the ratio of student foot traffic on campus and data related to how productive employees have been during the pandemic and 18 months of remote work. It is evident that the majority of Oxnard College students have decided to continue

their learning online and continue to receive counseling services virtually. As of August 17, 2021, on average, there was approximately 16.5% availability in online classes compared to 76.5% availability in in-person classes. It is important to be mindful that in-person classes also had fewer seats to promote more social distancing- nonetheless were still significantly less enrolled. There were 326 sections offered online, of which 35% were full compared to 153 sections offered in-person, of which 13% were full. With consideration to all learning modalities (fully online classes, hybrid/hyFlex classes, and fully in-person classes) there is only about 23%-foot traffic on campus due to students attending classes in person. In other words, for about 23% student foot traffic on campus, counselors are mandated to provide 100% of their services from campus. In contrast, instructional faculty are not held to the same standard. Specifically, in the General Counseling Department, 197 students were served during the second week of the semester (8/23/21 - 8/26/21). Of the 197 students, only 51 students (26%) requested to see a counselor in person. This is consistent with the student foot traffic on campus as it relates to enrollment. The General Counseling Department at Oxnard College offered virtual counseling services far before the pandemic. The pandemic only propelled our efforts and provided a larger opportunity for all counselors to participate. All Oxnard College counselors have successfully served students for the past 18 months working remotely at similar rates to previous years (with decline of enrollment in consideration) with far more efficiency.

Resolved, That VCCCD Administration and each Board of Trustee Member immediately approve a remote and/or hybrid work model for the health, safety, and well-being of students and employees. The reduction in on-campus activities will drastically reduce exposure to COVID-19. In-person services will still be offered albeit in a safer environment for students and employees alike. Workers given the flexibility of some remote work have an obligation to provide the same level of service, confidentiality and professionalism that a student would receive in-person. To ensure some amount of equity and fairness, all of the following would need to be implemented:

1. Allow remote work when an employee is well enough to work, but is unable to come to campus because they have symptoms and the app gives them a red pass.
2. Allow remote work when an employee is exposed to COVID-19 and must quarantine so long as they are well enough to work.
3. Allow remote work when an employee's child is quarantined from school or childcare due to COVID-19 exposure or is sent home sick.
4. Allow a rotating in-person/remote schedule that assures the office is always open during regular business hours.
 - a. For example, an employee might work half of their time in the office and half from a remote location.
 - b. The exact percentages might change according to our students' needs.
 - c. Allow our dean to exercise their right to assign based upon the department's/students' needs.

We are not a remote institution, but truly the world is changing and what our students want and need will change with it. We don't need to be constrained by office space, time, or meeting place. We can meet students where they need us—whether that's in-person or remotely.