

Student Success at Los Rios

ABOUT LOS RIOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

The Los Rios Community College District is one of the nation's most respected learning institutions and the second-largest community college district in California, serving the greater Sacramento region. Los Rios includes: American River, Cosumnes River, Folsom Lake and Sacramento City colleges; six major education and outreach centers; and specialized workforce and economic development programs for regional businesses, governments and organizations. Los Rios colleges offer AA/AS degrees, certificates and transfer-education opportunities in more than 70 career fields. The District's 2,400-square mile service area includes all of Sacramento and El Dorado counties and parts of Yolo, Placer and Solano counties. About 75,000 students are enrolled in the four Los Rios Colleges.

Of the 125,000 federal financial aid applications received by the financial aid offices in Los Rios, approximately 24,000 students will receive Title IV Federal Student Aid from one of the Los Rios Colleges. Almost all of these students are eligible for the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver.

Los Rios Community College District
 1919 Spanos Court
 Sacramento, CA 95825

Taking Action to Ensure Protections for Student Financial Aid Programs

Executive Summary

Today there is an exhaustive body of regulations that govern financial aid eligibility, administration and operations, but of particular importance is a long-standing requirement that a college not award a student aid for classes that do not count toward a financial aid-eligible degree or certificate. Specifically, the [Student Financial Handbook](#) clarifies 34 CFR 668.2 and states, "you cannot award the student aid for classes that do not count toward his degree, certificate, or other recognized credential."

The Los Rios Colleges have long requested that the District's system functionality be developed to ensure that financial aid is only funding degree-applicable units. The financial risks associated with funding courses that are not degree applicable could mean sanctions for any of our colleges, including repayment and possible loss of the college's ability to administer Title IV aid.

For students, it means staying on track to complete certificates and degrees, and:

- Fewer students will be denied aid due to reaching maximum timeframe (SAP).
- Fewer students should be impacted by Pell Grant limitation.
- Fewer students should lose their loan subsidies.
- Student program completion should improve.

Course Audit Software Automates Review of Eligible Courses/Programs

Over the course of several years, and in consultation with college financial aid administrators, system requirements have been identified. District personnel from IT began programming for certificate programs, which provided colleges with reports that allowed them to identify courses that were not degree applicable, or financial aid eligible. Students were notified and awards were adjusted manually.

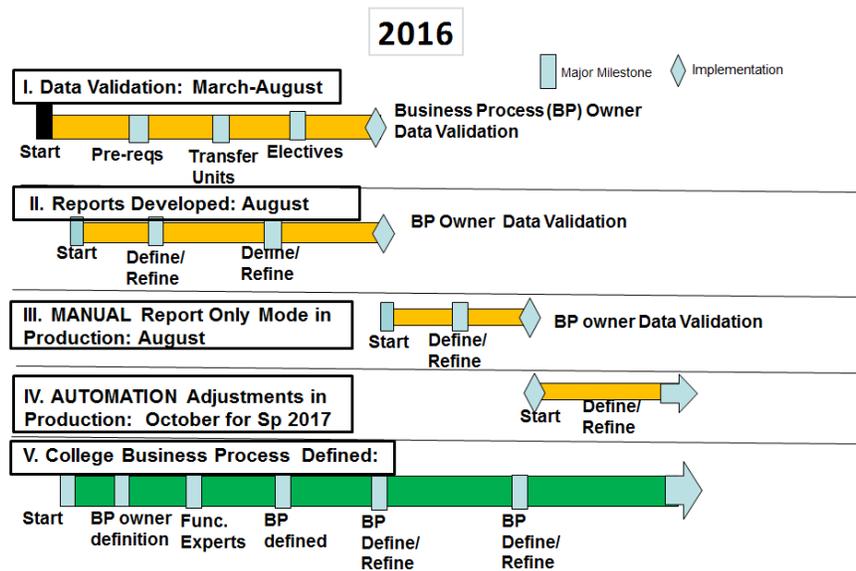
Currently, a vendor under contract with the District to provide mobile app services for student enrollment indicated that it had a technology-based solution to identify courses that were not degree applicable or financial aid eligible. The vendor's course audit software, along with the District's existing degree audit tool, will use an automated process to ensure that the courses a student enrolls in will meet the requirements for federal financial aid.

Why now?

The U.S. Department of Education has [named](#) hundreds of colleges whose federal aid it has restricted because of concerns about their finances or compliance with federal requirements. Institutions are being closely watched to ensure they are using federal student aid in a way that is accountable to both students and taxpayers. The Los Rios Colleges are committed to ensuring that students can continue to pursue their educational goals with the support provided by federal financial aid, free of any risks that could jeopardize the Colleges' ability to administer future federal grants and loans.

Timeline

Over the next several months considerable effort will be dedicated to ensuring that the systems are updated and accurate. The following revised timeline will allow the Colleges’ business process owners to continue to validate course data through reports that will be made available to college personnel with the initial disbursement for fall 2016. Beginning with the October registration cycle for spring 2017, the process will be automated; students will be notified about whether the courses they enrolled in are degree applicable and financial aid eligible.



Acknowledgements

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Staff Contact

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