

The Case for Community College

When interacting with students about post-high school education, what messages are we conveying - directly, or through internalized bias- about the option of attending community college?

Consider the experience of Carlmont Class of 2014 grad Jannah Perry:

I was supposed to graduate from the University of Idaho in 2018. However, after attending a mere semester, I desperately wanted to get back home. But coming home? That meant community college, where the “unsuccessful” students went. My entire life I had an image of community college students being “less-than” compared to the “real” college students. It was always seen as the back-up, and never a first choice.

In 2015, I started at De Anza Community College. My first day I felt extreme shame, embarrassment, and failure. In reality, during my time at DeAnza I was the most challenged I had ever been. I was taking an anthropology course from a professor who turned down a job at Harvard because of his passion for community college, an English course from a professor who attained her PhD from UC Berkeley for the sole purpose of teaching at a community college, and a statistics course from a professor who taught late night classes twice a week on the side out of a pure love for teaching, as he simultaneously worked for Apple.

After my year and a half at De Anza I was accepted into UC Berkeley and UCLA, and I’m now a third-year UCLA transfer student. It was my very “real” community college experience that completely prepared me for a top UC level education. I’m in a unique position having now attended an out-of-state four-year institution, a community college, and a top UC. I can say with confidence that if I could go back and do it all over again my senior year, I would have skipped applying to four year colleges and immediately registered for community college.

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What if we, as teachers, counselors, school staff, and parents, actually presented the range of college options without embedding them in a hierarchical framework? Community colleges have evolved, expanded, and changed in relevance over the years, yet many of us are likely holding on to preconceived ideas or negative beliefs about this educational opportunity. Ask yourself:

- Do phrases such as “Well, there’s always community college” creep into your conversations?
- Do you share this option only after it appears a four-year college is deemed “unrealistic” for some reason?
- Do you celebrate a student’s acceptance into a UC or Stanford differently than their decision to attend Cañada or De Anza?

It is these types of comments and behaviors that help perpetuate an anti - community college bias, and present barriers for students attempting to make the best decision for themselves about their educational future.

The truth is that community college is both a viable and best choice for many students, and may be the option that will successfully support their mental health, maximize their financial resources, and secure their academic success post high school.

benefits@seq

Q & A with Jacqueline McEvoy, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent Human Resources and Student Services (Part I)

Q: How have your past experiences led you to your HR position here at SUHSD?

A: This is my second year with the district, and I really enjoy my job. People are my passion, and I find there is never a dull moment in this position. Previously I was a HS Principal for about 15 years, serving at Peninsula Continuation High School, San Mateo High School, and Palo Alto High. Just prior to coming to the SUHSD I worked in HR for four years in the South San Francisco School District. As a Principal, it became very clear to me that taking care of the people who deliver services to students is key. Having a Healthy School District means ensuring that staff, students and campuses are physically and emotionally safe and supported.

Q: What do you see as the critical focus of HR?

A: Human Resources can be very rule-driven, and one can get bogged down in this. I feel that the STORY is really important; listening to, working to understand, and having empathy for the complex lives and challenges that people have. Balancing the rules/legal issues with the needs, concerns, and behaviors of individuals can be very tricky. My overall perspective in all situations is that it is absolutely essential that everyone be treated with respect, no matter what the actual outcome of any situation may be.

Q: Are there any HR services that you would like staff to know more about and/or that you feel are under-utilized?

A: Yes, the Employee Assistance Program. This district provides full family benefits through Aetna that is not only about counseling or mental health support. Services are also available to help with financial planning, housing concerns, and legal issues, to name only a few. While employees may be able to access a number of these services through their chosen medical plan, that can be a process that is more complex and time consuming. I would encourage all staff to login and explore the EAP options provided by Aetna.

Another tendency I've seen is that people do not call BEFORE the crisis happens. Most situations have a trajectory or early indicators of where something may be headed so please, pick up the phone and ask me "What do I do about xyz?"— the sooner the better in most cases! One example of being proactive is to find out about spouse/partner leave options when a couple is having/adopting a child. Knowing about and planning for this benefit really does not have to wait until you're on the way to the delivery room. Conversations are confidential, and your HR staff are here to help!

Parent Education Reduces College Admissions Stress

By Charlene Margot, M.A., Director, The Parent Education Series

For many students and their families, college admissions is a source of stress and anxiety. According to Lloyd Thacker, co-author of the Harvard initiative *Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions*, college admissions can and should be a meaningful, productive, and healthful experience for all involved. In a powerful address at Sequoia High School, Thacker emphasized the importance of the *student* in shaping his or her college experience— that is, both ethical and intellectual engagement are critical in capturing the strengths of students across race, class, and culture.

At Woodside and Carlmont, Maria Furtado, Executive Director of Colleges That Change Lives (CTCL), used wit and humor to convey her message that the college search should be about the *student* and finding the “right fit” school. Too many students and their families focus on rankings and name-brand colleges. Instead, an individual student’s ambitions, style, challenges, hopes and dreams are critical to creating a list of college options.

As a capstone event, Julie Lythcott-Haims, bestselling author of *How to Raise an Adult*, Lloyd Thacker, and Abby Falik, founder of nonprofit Global Citizen Year, engaged the audience at Menlo-Atherton in “Defining the New College Readiness.” For many students, a gap or “bridge” year experience after high school—whether abroad or working in a community close to home—can help build self-awareness, global skills and grit, the foundations for success in college and beyond.

WAC Updates: Green Folder & Kognito Training

By now, all teachers and staff are probably familiar with the Green Folder Initiative that the District launched this fall semester. In case you missed it, under the **Green Folder Initiative**, each high school campus published a series of documents that serve as a quick reference guide to mental health resources for school staff who may interact with students in distress. A theme throughout the folder is **See Something, Say Something, Do Something**. It is the hope that all staff familiarize themselves with the common signs of distress as listed in the folder and the protocols at the school site once they have identified such a student. The protocols laid out in the folder clarify whom they should contact in event of an emergency.

Distribution of the folders was accompanied by a brief overview at each of the school sites by the mental health coordinator. Each school site made its own determination how and when they wanted to distribute the Green Folder contents. If you missed the staff meeting when this was offered, please feel free to contact any counseling staff at your school site about any questions you may have.

In conjunction with the ideas behind the Green Folder and the District's goals on the mental health of our students, all staff will be receiving mental health training via Kognito's online platform. **Kognito** offers a suite of professional development simulations for school personnel that gives them the necessary tools to negotiate sensitive topics and conversations with students. Each person being trained will assume an avatar and have simulated conversations with a student avatar under various scenarios.

During the January 10th District-wide Professional Development, all district personnel will undergo Kognito training in their afternoon sessions. Sincere appreciation goes to the Sequoia Healthcare District for their generous support of all the District's mental health efforts.

(Both the Green Folder Initiative and Kognito training were introduced to us by WAC Executive Committee member Becky Beacom; they came to fruition with the support of Superintendent Dr. Lianides, leadership of Dr. Karen Li, and the collaboration of the District's Mental Health Task Force.)

Staff and Students Needed for Focus Group

Help promote student voice in the ongoing development of the district's mental health and wellness program. The Wellness Advisory Council is seeking a teacher or staff member at each school site to recruit students representing a diverse cross-section of our student body to participate in a pilot of the Kognito game-based learning activity **Friend2Friend**, designed to equip students with knowledge and skills to help a friend showing signs of psychological distress. WAC has applied for funding from Get Healthy San Mateo County (awards to be announced by 12/1) and hopes to conduct the pilot so that students can evaluate the program's relevance and efficacy and be empowered to share their feedback with district admin as they consider purchasing this tool for use across the district.

Participating students will complete a 25-minute interactive on-line activity, as well as pre- and post-surveys to solicit feedback on the module. A follow-up focus group, facilitated by a mental health staff member, will be held at each of the six sites to allow for student discussion of their experience. Students will receive a gift card for their participation. We would like 50 students from each of the four comprehensive sites and 15 from each Redwood and EPAA, for a total of 230 student participants.

If you are interested, please contact Dana Schuster at momofsubstance@att.net or (650) 868-8934 by December 16th.

Food Services Nutritional Info

By Nora DeCaro, Director, Food Services

The district has now procured Mosaic (formally known as NutraKids), a nutritional analysis database, that will list specific nutrient information for all menu items offered through Food Services. District nurses, teachers, students, and parents will now be able to know the carb counts, calories, and other specific nutrient content information to better support individuals with food allergies, diabetes, or other food-impacted conditions.

Jennifer Stimson, MS, RD, has been hired as a consultant to build the database and then update information in this 'living document' as new items are added to the menu. By the time of printing of this newsletter the information on all core menu items should be available on the district website—specific link TBA.

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Orange-Apricot Scones

(adapted from recipe courtesy of Deborah Madison)

Yield: 8 scones

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 tablespoon plus ¼ teaspoon baking powder
 ½ teaspoon baking soda
 ¼ cup sugar
 1 teaspoon orange zest
 Pinch salt
 8 tablespoons **cold** butter (1 stick), cut into small pieces
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 ¾ cup cold buttermilk
 2 small fresh apricots, pitted and chopped finely, and frozen (*see note)
 Buttermilk Glaze

Buttermilk Glaze:

½ cup powdered sugar
 1 tablespoon buttermilk
 ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
 Place the powdered sugar into a small bowl, add in the buttermilk and vanilla; whisk together until well-blended and it becomes a thick yet “drizzle-able” glaze, then cover with plastic and keep in fridge until ready to use.

*Place your chopped apricot into the freezer for about 30 minutes before beginning, so that it will not crush or smash as easily when incorporated into the batter. If you use canned/jarred apricots, pat them as dry as possible and freeze them slightly BEFORE you chop them, then return them to the freezer as noted.

Preparation:

- 1) Preheat the oven to 375° and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 2) Add the flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, orange zest and salt to a large bowl, and whisk them together to combine very well; next, add in the cold butter, and using a pastry cutter, forks or even your fingers, work the butter into the flour as quickly as possible (to keep it cold) until it forms little “pea size” lumps and resembles coarse meal.
- 3) Add the vanilla to the buttermilk, and make a little well in the center of the dry ingredients; add the buttermilk in, along with the diced apricot, and fold all ingredients together until the dry ingredients become moist and begin to come together to form dough (take care not to over-work the dough); gather the dough together into a ball as best as possible, then place it onto a lightly floured work surface.
- 4) Form the dough into a disk shape that is about 1” thick, then cut the disk into 8 equal-sized wedges, and place those scone wedges onto the parchment-lined baking sheet, and bake for about 24-26 minutes, until pale-golden; allow them to cool completely.
- 5) Once cooled, drizzle them with the Buttermilk Glaze and allow it firm up for a few minutes before serving.

Orzotto with Peas

(courtesy of Kelsey Nixon for the Food Network)

Serves 4

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	1 small onion, diced
1 1/2 cups orzo	1/4 cup dry white wine (or chicken stock)
3 cups low-sodium chicken stock	1/2 cup frozen petite green peas, thawed
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese	2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh basil
1/4 cup heavy cream	1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
Juice of one lemon	Salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

- 1) Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté until fragrant and translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the orzo and toast for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the wine (or 1/4 cup stock) and cook until absorbed, about 1 minute.
- 2) Gradually add 3 cups of stock, stirring frequently. Bring to a simmer, then lower the heat and cover. Cook until the liquid is almost absorbed and the orzo is tender, 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat.
- 3) Stir in peas, Parmesan, basil, cream, lemon zest and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper.