



## Post-Webinar Plática\* Q&A with Rebecca LaCount of Solano College

\* Plática = talk, or chat

CLP hosted a series of webinars to support student services faculty, staff, and administrators at community colleges across California as they re-orient to providing services completely online during the Covid-19 pandemic. Find information about the series (and additional materials) at <https://www.careerladdersproject.org/problem-solving-moving-student-supports-online-a-clp-webinar-series>. Rebecca LaCount, counseling faculty in the Puente program at Solano Community College, was one of the presenters.

Rebecca LaCount's [presentation](#) addressed communications challenges and how she's working through those challenges with her students and colleagues. We followed up with her to ask a few additional questions about the transition to online services and how enrollment management has changed in an online environment.

**CLP: Can you share what it has been like reaching out to high school counselors during this time as you work with incoming students in an online environment? Can you discuss the experience you and your colleagues are having building a rapport with your peers at the high school level?**

**LaCount:** We definitely are having a lot of online interactions with our peers. In some ways, it has been easier to build rapport with our high school partners because they are in the same boat with being completely online. High school counselors are hungry for college information to give to their students. We have put a lot of information on Basecamp\* around things that are happening like the summer bridge program, the first-year experience, and the Puente and Umoja programs. I reached out to counselors on Basecamp about a virtual new student workshop, and we have received a lot of good feedback. I feel that our peers in high schools have been very responsive to what we have done.

\*Basecamp is an online project management tool that allows participants to share information and to have conversations.

**CLP: What challenges do you think you might have when dealing with incoming students who may not be familiar with online learning or orienting themselves to college completely online?**

**LaCount:** Online education isn't for everyone, so it's difficult when we are forced to provide instruction that way, especially for someone who is just starting college. One of my biggest challenges -- how do

you build community and rapport with students when you aren't there face to face with them? We want the students to feel seen and heard, and it's harder when you cannot do it face to face.

For me, I'm the Puente counselor at the college, and the program is built by fostering a sense of community and having a cohort of students who get to know each other. Building this community will be difficult in an online environment. I really see this as the biggest challenge. One positive thing is that we are having so many meetings with students on Zoom, and building a rapport online is going better than I thought. But I do worry about how it will work out in the long run because there are things that you miss online that you might catch in person about body language or a student's reaction to a particular situation.

**CLP: What do you think might be helpful for outreach and enrollment during this time? How has Solano College retooled its efforts to facilitate reaching out to students to meet enrollment goals?**

**LaCount:** I would suggest or request for us to find ways to streamline the process of enrollment and getting the student into class. Our outreach coordinator is responsible for most of the outreach for our college. She has been online and has been offering virtual application workshops and has let counselors know about these sessions through the counselor network on Basecamp. She has provided concurrent enrollment forms for students at the high school level; prior to COVID-19 high school counselors needed to sign those forms as well as their principal with wet signatures. Some students and even staff don't have printers or scanners at home, so our outreach counselor got some information from the CCC Chancellor's Office and we learned that it was okay to have electronic signatures on these forms. We need to think about issues like this to help streamline processes. We need to think of ways to eliminate barriers to getting things done and if that means we need to have electronic forms, then I hope we can start using those so people aren't burdened with going somewhere to print a few forms.

I'm hopeful that we can streamline a lot of our enrollment processes so that there are fewer obstacles for incoming students. We are cautiously optimistic that we will maintain our enrollment. There might be more students who choose to attend a community college because of the uncertainty with the pandemic.

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