Post-Webinar Plática* Q&A
with Val Garcia of West Hills College Lemoore

* 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/. Val Garcia, vice president of student services at West Hills College Lemoore, was one of the presenters.

Val's presentation focused on how his college is responding to the non-instructional needs of students. We asked him to expand on some of the subjects he touched on in hopes that we can continue to share and build out our California Counseling Network (CaCN) community of practice.

CLP: How does your team prioritize case-managing students' non-instructional needs?

Garcia: We are trying to keep our Guided Pathways framework in focus, in the sense we are building on existing processes and structures. And we know that at every point, change is going to happen. We are going to accept it, and not fight it. Every time you had a plan, it got tossed out or we had to make a new plan in this current crisis. So our first approach is to keep Guided Pathways in mind and accept that change was going to occur in this process of handling the non-instructional needs of our students.

The model that we use has a stop sign with green, yellow, and red colors. The VP of Instruction explained to faculty that it was important to continue the existing process. This color-coded model is based on our existing case notes system.

We group students into three categories. For example, yellow represents an 'early alert.' Those who have laptops or internet access issues fit in this category. Those who are coded red might be experiencing social or mental health issues, or they may have family members with illness, or they could be experiencing daycare issues. These are students of high concern. And students who are coded green would have excused absences or a minor scheduling issue.

CLP: Has it been difficult to take this case management completely online in the pandemic?

Garcia: This last week was spring break (early April), so we will find out shortly. Our team has access to our system to see student records and Student Aid Reports online and Inspire for Advisors for case

management notes. We already take notes online so it shouldn't be too different in terms of documentation. The only piece we are missing is that we have yet to meet as CARE Teams yet.

CLP: How was the CARE (Concern, Activate, Remedy and Evaluate) Team model developed?

Garcia: C is for identifying the concern that a student is having. A is for activating the resource to address the concern. R is for a remedy to follow up with resources. E is for evaluate, where we evaluate at the end of each cycle how well we served the students; this is where we close or fill in any gaps. This comes out of the work that we were already doing on campus to holistically address student issues, while working together.

CLP: Do you have any worksheets or documents that you can share with our community about how your team evaluates its progress in supporting non-instructional needs?

Garcia: Not yet. We are developing them. When we have something, I would be happy to share it.

CLP: How is your team reaching out to students who might not be approaching your team for help? You can sometimes gauge who is experiencing difficulties more easily with face-to-face interactions.

Garcia: We have predictive analytics that tell us the likelihood of someone succeeding or not in class; they are coded and we are proactive in reaching out to students. CIVITAS pulls in data from Canvas in real-time to show how students are doing. Our counselors will be proactive to reach into the databases and to see who the analytics are suggesting we call. The president of our college often talks about how well Amazon knows its customers. We try to take a similar approach with our students by using the data that we have available.

CLP: Are you encountering a lot of anxiety or mental health issues that students might be experiencing because of the Covid-19 pandemic? How is your team handling those?

Garcia: As part of our CARE teams' efforts, we will refer our students to online therapists. We just signed on with a therapist service that will conduct Zoom sessions. To help reduce anxiety, we plan to be very transparent and to inform students of their options. For instance, can they do something other than drop or use correspondence education? If a student doesn't have access to the internet or a laptop, our faculty can give the student a course packet. We have to be open to assisting students with different formats. We don't want to set them back; we want to be clear and offer them options

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