

**Decision by SEVP Director**

***Full Course of Study: California Community Colleges Crisis***

**Date: November 12, 2009**

1. Effective immediately and to be reviewed each semester until the current crisis is resolved, the following guidance will be used by all SEVP personnel involved in the determination of whether an undergraduate student in the California Community College system is enrolled in a full course of study.
2. There are no previous decisions by the SEVP Director on this issue.
3. Media reports and communication with the California Community College Chancellor's Office, which is attached, confirms that the combination of significant decreases in budget and increased enrollment has strained California's community colleges so that there is insufficient space in courses for the number of students. International students, even availing themselves of all the available options for concurrent enrollment and online study, are unable to enroll in what the regulations have defined as a full course of study.
4. 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(B) defines a full course as follows:

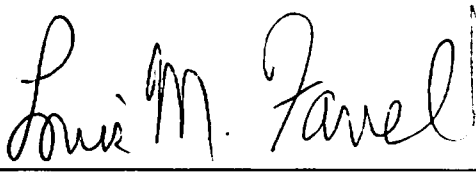
Undergraduate study at a college or university, certified by a school official to consist of at least twelve semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term in those institutions using standard semester, trimester, or quarter hour systems, where all undergraduate students who are enrolled for a minimum of twelve semester or quarter hours are charged full-time tuition or are considered full-time for other administrative purposes, or its equivalent (as determined by the district director in the school approval process), except when the student needs a lesser course load to complete the course of study during the current term;
5. Due to these extenuating circumstances, this Director's decision will authorize SEVP-certified community colleges in California, to enroll their F-1 nonimmigrant students in the number of credits certified by their designated school officials (DSO) as a full course of study. These students must enroll in at least one course (three credit hours) per term which requires their physical presence. Otherwise, they may enroll in online courses and/or reduce their course loads to fewer than 12 credits, as approved by DSOs. The reduced course load function in SEVIS does need not to be used, but a copy of this directive must be kept in the student's file. The student's SEVIS file must be annotated to reflect this Director's Decision.
6. In authorizing this flexibility for schools in determining the full course of study available, SEVP wishes that schools are clear on the available parameters of

online training available to credit toward a full course of study. 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(G) allows:

For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class.

There is no limit to the number of online classes that can be counted toward a full course of study if the school can confirm the physical presence and participation of students. SEVP encourages schools to make maximum use of monitored online training as feasible.

7. SEVP certified schools should maintain a list of students for whom they have provided relief identified in this decision
8. SEVP is aware that there are other states and college systems in the United States facing similar issues. The Director will consider allowing similar ameliorative standards if contacted by a state's department of education or an administrative office of a community college system.

Approved: 

Louis M. Farrell  
Director

Date: NOVEMBER 12, 2009  
Student and Exchange Visitor Program

Attachment: Letter from Chancellor Jack Scott

October 26, 2009

Katherine H. Westerlund

Management and Program Analyst

Student and Exchange Visitor Program

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

2450 Crystal Drive, Century Tower 1, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor

Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Ms. Westerlund:

I am writing in response to your email of October 8, 2009, to Executive Vice Chancellor for Programs Morgan Lynn. You have asked whether media and campus reports of high enrollment demand in the California Community Colleges are accurate and whether high enrollment demand is posing a barrier to enrollment in 12 units per semester for international students on F-1 visas. I can confirm that enrollment demand is indeed surpassing the funding available to the California Community Colleges to offer classes and services. As a result, many students are finding it difficult to develop an appropriate 12-unit course schedule. This problem is especially acute for new students, who generally have lower enrollment priority than continuing students, and for students who register late in the process. Many F-1 students fall into these categories and find themselves unable to register for 12 units.

Should the Student and Exchange Visitors Program be able to provide community colleges with flexibility in defining what constitutes a full course of study for F-1 students it would be very helpful to enabling these students to be successful in reaching their educational objectives and fulfilling the goals for international education that we all share. Thank you for recognizing this problem and being proactive in proposing a solution.

Should you have additional questions or a need for assistance, please feel free to contact Linda Michalowski, Vice Chancellor for Student Services and Special Programs at (916) 327-5361 or by email to [lmichalo@cccoco.edu](mailto:lmichalo@cccoco.edu).

Sincerely,

Jack Scott, Ph.D.

Chancellor

cc: Morgan Lynn

Linda Michalowski