

REPORT TO CHANCELLOR RE: STUDENT FRAUD

The fraud issue at hand:

- Early April- Faculty reported suspicious canvas activity in their classes. The issue was at first treated as an academic integrity concern. On April 12th, after both colleges recognized similar patterns, the suspicious activity was reported to A&R and Financial aid as possible fraudulent (PF) students.
- April 13th- 14th- The initial discovery began, and several patterns emerged with the applications reported. Mike Copenhaver was able to speak to an individual whose identity was used to complete a GC application and confirm he had not applied to the college or applied for financial aid. This led to the decision to postpone a financial aid disbursement that was scheduled to go out on April 15th.
- April 16th: A group comprised of representatives from A&R, Financial Aid, Distance Education and IT convened to discuss the status of the issue and determine next steps.
- Financial Aid worked with John Campbell to identify possible fraudulent FAFSAs.
- April 18th- Financial Aid was able to release their disbursement after removing possible fraudulent students from their disbursement batches. We believe we were able to catch all if not most of the fraudulent students in time to avoid them getting financial aid.
 - Roughly 290 Financial Aid suspected fraudulent students removed from April disbursement at Grossmont
 - Roughly 60 Financial Aid suspected fraudulent students removed from April disbursement at Cuyamaca
 - More suspected fraudulent FAFSA applications are coming in, but Financial Aid is now blocking these students from getting disbursed
- The Financial Aid Directors contacted the Office of Inspector General (OIG) on April 16 to report our potential fraud situation. A case number was opened for both colleges. The Directors will work with IT to report potentially fraud data to OIG. The Directors emailed the Chancellors Office (Educational Services and Support Division) on April 21st to inform them of our situation and that we had notified OIG.
- A&R worked to create a rubric using fraudulent indicators in accordance with information provided by the California Community Colleges Spam Committee of CCCApply.
- A hold of Possible Fraud (PF) was applied to identified applications for Spring 21, Summer 21 and Fall 21. Students were notified to contact the A&R offices.
- District-Wide we had 15,792 applications for the 2021 year.
 - From the applicants 5,999 were identified as fraudulent for Grossmont
 - 1,634 for Cuyamaca
 - After removing duplicate applications 6,323 accounts were flagged with the hold of PF

- New applications will be continuously evaluated using the rubric A&R created, until a more robust filter is created by IT.
- Financial Aid is currently investigating if aid was disbursed to any possible fraudulent applicants in any of their earlier disbursements.

Why This Occurred:

- OpenCCC has two different rubrics for detecting spam, some are automatically downloaded, while others get sent Spam Filter for Review.
- Currently, we do not have a robust process for reviewing the import of these applications. (IT uploads applications and A&R reviews the Spam Filter.)
- Financial Aid suspects fraud ring with access to stolen identities from outside sources filed fraudulent FAFSAs for students.

Future Planning

- Build an additional filter for automatic imports of applications. IT and campus resources are need for this. This process will align with what other schools in the state are doing.
- Build a robust rubric that will generate a report to help us validate applications from the Spam filter. IT and campus resources are needed for this.
- Work with Instruction to ensure rosters are cleared of inactive students before census and provide clear guidance to faculty on how to handle potential suspicious or inactive students.