



January 21, 2020

Re: Inter-district Attendance and Recruitment

Dear Colleagues:

In recent months, concerns have been expressed to me and to my office regarding community college district efforts to recruit students from neighboring districts. Historically, this issue becomes a concern whenever enrollment is in decline, because district funding is inextricably linked to student attendance. While a student is free to enroll in the college and district of their choice, there are restrictions on how districts may engage in recruitment of non-district-resident students. I take this opportunity at the beginning of a new calendar year, and well before the start of a new academic one, to review district rights and obligations in this area, and to encourage respectful cooperation among our system leaders.

With the enactment of Assembly Bill 2061 in 1987, it became the policy of the state to allow “each resident of the state an equal opportunity to attend the community college of his or her choice.” (Ed. Code, § 78030, subd. (d).) Districts were prohibited from adopting inter-district attendance restrictions, absent extenuating circumstances to be determined by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. (See Ed. Code §§ 78030 & 78031). In order to give this policy meaning, it is also true that students should have access to information about educational opportunities throughout the community colleges.

Nevertheless, while permitting *students* to choose where to enroll, the Legislature has placed restrictions on *districts’* ability to recruit students outside their boundaries. The Education Code provides that a district may not actively “recruit” students outside of its boundaries, unless it reaches an agreement with the district in which it seeks to recruit. (Ed. Code, § 78032, subd., (c)(1).) In this context, “recruitment” means encouragement of student attendance in the district by: (1) mailing of class schedules or other written information except to current or former students of the district or at the addressee’s request; or (2) personal visits by a representative of the



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community college district to any high school, except in response to an invitation from the school district of which the high school is part. (See Ed. Code, § 78032(c)(3)(A))¹

While these forms of recruitment may have diminishing relevance in an era where college recruitment activities involve forms of media that know no boundaries, it is important to abide by the letter and spirit of the Education Code in order to maintain collegial, productive working relationships among the California Community Colleges leadership.

Accordingly, I urge each of you to communicate respectfully with one another on these matters, and where possible to enter into cooperative and mutually beneficial arrangements that also ensure our students have information about the range of opportunities our colleges provide.

Sincerely,

Eloy Ortiz Oakley
Chancellor

¹ Education Code section 78032(c)(2) provides that when a district enters a recruitment agreement with another district, the recruiting district “shall recruit from all high schools within that other district, and may not favor any high schools over other high schools within that other district.”