

# Chapter 8

## Federal Compliance

- Credits, Program Length and Tuition
- Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act
- Advertising and Recruitment Materials
- Records of Student Complaints





Mesa Community College has a solid history of operating with integrity in fiscal and legal matters. This is evidenced in part by the college's compliance with federal and state regulations as well as MCCCDC policies or guidelines. This section addresses institutional compliance with federal mandates.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mesa Community College is in full compliance with all requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1998. (*See Resource Room: Financial Aid Documents.*) Documentation of the college's approval to participate in and comply with Title IV include the Program Participation Agreement (PPA), the Eligibility and Certification Renewal (ECAR), and the official cohort default rates for the past three years (2001, 2002, and 2003).

The college demonstrates compliance by completing the Program Participation Agreement (PPA) every five years, which signifies Mesa Community College's agreement with the rules and regulations associated with good stewardship of the federal aid programs. The last PPA was completed in 2001 and is scheduled to be updated in 2006. Mesa Community College operates the federal aid programs with integrity by using information about students and financial aid responsibly. This is evidenced by yearly completion of the Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP). The FISAP is the approved federal vehicle the college uses to document previous year usage of funding received in Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, and Federal Work Study.

The ability of MCC's Student Financial Services to administer federal aid programs appropriately was further demonstrated during the fall of 2003. At that time, the Student Financial Services office was instrumental in the identification and apprehension of a student allegedly misusing federal aid. The office was subsequently recognized by the United States Department of Education's Office of Inspector General for its dedication and support to Investigative Services, Region IX, during the apprehension of the alleged abuser of Title IV student aid.

Mesa Community College undergoes an audit of its Student Financial Services office each year by the State Office of the Auditor General. The most recent audit, conducted during fall 2003, did not reveal any negative findings. Results of the audit are available from the Maricopa County Community Colleges District Support Office. (*See Resource Room: Financial Aid State Audit.*) There have been no limitations, restrictions, or termination measures taken against any Title IV program at Mesa Community College. The college's Student Financial

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Services office has not been audited by the Office of Inspector General of the United States Department of Education.

Mesa Community College's Student Financial Services office regularly monitors the college's student loan default rate. On average, for the most recent three-year period, the default rate for the Federal Family Educational Loan programs (FFELP) at MCC is 11.3% and the average default rate for the Perkins Loan Program is 30.6%. The office of Student Financial Services has implemented default management procedures to ensure the rate is within an acceptable range for all loan programs. Table 8-1 below illustrates default rates for the past three years.

Table 8-1

STUDENT LOAN DEFAULT RATES AT MCC FOR MOST RECENT THREE-YEAR PERIOD				
Loan Type	AY 2000	AY 2001	AY 2002	AY 2003
FFELP	12.7%	10.3%	11%	Not published
Perkins	---	22.5%	32%	37.29%

Institutional efforts to control student loan defaults include required loan entrance counseling for first-time borrowers. Loan entrance counseling is available online through a web based product provided by United Student Aid Funds, a Sallie Mae company. When the student completes the counseling session, the college is notified. The notation is posted to the student's financial aid record and the loan is processed. The college utilizes the National Student Loan Data System to track loan indebtedness of its federal aid applicants and notifies the students when the aggregate loan debt is close to or over the amount available per federal requirements.

The college makes every effort to meet with students who have previously borrowed a significant number of student loans to educate them about debt management and the consequences of default. In addition, disbursement of student loans is delayed to first-year, first-time borrowers by the required 30 days from the first date of the term. The college's financial aid packaging policy includes various components of default management such as: 1) student loans are packaged last and only if the student requests a loan; and 2) student loans are not packaged automatically for both a FFELP Loan and a Perkins Loan.

Two key areas paramount to ensuring compliance are recordkeeping and training. The office of Student Financial Services recently implemented a document imaging and retrieval system to capture key documents required for a student's financial aid record. The system

reduces the number of misfiled documents and provides the ability to view the student's record at both comprehensive campuses. This improves the financial aid process for students. In addition, staff members receive regular training through a series of internal college training opportunities as well as financial aid training workshops offered at the state and regional level.

As required by the Student Right to Know Act, other federally mandated Title IV reporting includes disclosure of campus crime and graduation rates for students, including student athletes.

### **DISCLOSURE OF CAMPUS CRIME AND GRADUATION RATES**

Mesa Community College complies with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics Act (originally known as the Campus Security Act) by filing crime statistics annually with the U.S. Department of Education. Information on the Clery Act as well as crime statistics for all post-secondary institutions may be found on the MCC College Safety website. The MCC College Safety update is reported via email on a weekly basis and annual crime statistics are posted on the college website as well as on the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) website for students titled, College Opportunities Online.

Mesa Community College complies with the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) by completing an annual EADA report. (*See Resource Room: Athletics.*) The Maricopa District office of Institutional Effectiveness reports annual data for the District's 10 member colleges to the IPEDS administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. The EADA includes graduation rates for athletes and IPEDS includes graduation rates for the Student Right To Know Cohort. These are all available for students through the IPEDS website, College Opportunities Online.

### **CREDITS, PROGRAM LENGTH, AND TUITION**

MCC operates on a semester schedule with fall and spring semesters each running 16 weeks. The majority of classes are identified as lab, lecture or a combination of lab and lecture. One credit is awarded for each fifty minutes a class meets per week. Day classes typically meet two, three or four times per week and evening classes meet one to two times a week. MCC also offers two 5-week summer sessions, one 8-week summer session, and a winter intersession that is scheduled between the fall and spring semesters. Late-start and short-term classes are available in a variety of lengths and at different start times, but all maintain the same class time per credit hour. In addition, MCC has more than 120 online classes.

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All classes are assigned credit with the majority of one-semester classes averaging three credits. Students may earn Certificates of Completion or Associate degrees based upon completed requirements. All degree programs include general education core requirements. In addition to the general education core each degree program has its own set of course requirements. Most Associate degrees require a minimum of 60 credit hours, depending upon the specific program of study.

Tuition is charged based upon residency of the student: in county, out-of-county, and out-of-state. All credit classes are charged the same per semester credit hour tuition rate. Out-of-county and out-of-state students are charged a higher tuition rate than in-county students; these students have a different tuition structure based upon the number of credits they take. Tuition rates are subject to change but are prominently published in the college catalog, class schedule, and on the college website. In addition to the per credit hour tuition all students are subject to a \$5 registration fee per semester. Most laboratory classes carry an additional lab fee. MCC participates in the Western Undergraduate Exchange Program which is sponsored by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). This program allows students from participating states to attend MCC and pay 150% of the resident tuition rate.

### VISITS TO OFF-CAMPUS LOCATIONS

Mesa Community College provides an array of educational opportunities at a number of different locations. By providing multiple sites for instruction the college is able to realize its strategic goal of “Access.” Expanding access allows MCC to better serve the educational needs of the community. (*See Resource Room: Strategic Plan: 2004-2007.*)

Mesa Community College is comprised of two full-service campuses, an Extended Campus and a number of in-state course locations. These are noted in the Annual Institutional Data Update, last submitted to the Higher Learning Commission in July 2004. Both MCC at Southern and Dobson and MCC at Red Mountain are comprehensive campuses. However, because Mesa Community College operates within a “one college, two campus” model, the campuses share the student information system. This allows students to apply, register and pay fees at either of the two locations, but the transactions are processed via one seamless data system.

MCC Extended Campus includes Tempe High School, Downtown Center/Centennial Way, Downtown Center/Country Club & Brown, Williams Campus, and MCC/Boswell Sunhealth Partnership. In addition, the college offers coursework at a number of

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community-based locations. All student admissions, registration, financial aid, as well as tuition and fee payments for these locations, are handled at one of the two comprehensive campuses and processed through MCC's shared student information system. Thus, none of these MCC sites meet federal requirements to be a stand-alone site.

#### ADVERTISING AND RECRUITING MATERIALS

Mesa Community College accurately reports its affiliation status with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) in all major college documents and publications, including reference to the HLC website and phone number. For example, the current MCC Catalog states the following:

Mesa Community College is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and a member of the North Central Association. Website: [www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org](http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org)  
Phone: (312) 263-0456

Other examples of marketing materials referencing accredited status include the class schedules and an October 2004 newspaper advertorial. HLC affiliation is also printed in numerous college publications such as Fast Facts 04-05, Faculty Handbook, Adjunct Faculty Handbook, and the Strategic Plan.

MCC also prominently publishes college contact information in all pertinent documents, recruitment materials and on the college website. Examples include the class schedules, catalog, college recruitment brochures or postcards, and print, radio and television advertisements.

#### RECORD OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

MCC records and responds to student complaints following defined and published policies and guidelines. Procedures for filing, recording and resolving both instructional and non-instructional student complaints are outlined in the student handbook. (*See Resource Room: Student Handbook 2004-2005.*) All complaints resulting from academic process issues are resolved through the faculty member, department chairperson and instructional deans as outlined in the student handbook. The description addresses initial steps, timelines, and resolution processes. The appropriate associate dean of instruction maintains a log of all written complaints in their discipline and how they were resolved.

Non-instructional complaints, including discrimination and sexual harassment issues, are forwarded to the Dean of Student Services (or designee) for resolution; this process is also

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clearly outlined in the student handbook and the MCCCCD Administrative Regulations. An associate dean of student services at the Southern and Dobson campus and the Red Mountain campus have been designated by the Dean of Student Services. Each associate dean follows procedures and protocols associated with issues resulting from non-instructional complaints. The appropriate associate dean of student services maintains a log of all written complaints and documentation of resolutions and sanctions imposed from their designated campus.

### SUMMARY

Mesa Community College complies with all federal compliance requirements. The college recognizes that compliance to stated requirements and exemplary execution of related responsibilities or processes is essential to the integrity of the institution.