

Connecticut Community Colleges

Student Life and Student Support Services Committee Recommendations

June 1, 2020

This report provides recommendations for Fall 2020 reopening plans related to student life and student support service areas. It is broken down into two sections, based upon two possible reopening scenarios: full on-ground reopening and limited hybrid reopening. Under the full on-ground reopening, it is assumed that most courses would occur on-campus. Under the limited hybrid reopening, it is assumed that most courses would remain online, but courses requiring hands-on learning (like labs and manufacturing) would have at least some of their coursework occurring on-campus. There are three primary areas of foci under these sections: supporting the whole student, supporting student learning, and supporting the completion of processes. This helps to organize the top priority functions to center on student needs.

Below are recommendations that apply regardless of which scenario we move forward with:

Housing insecurity – Ensure all campuses are fully embedded with Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness regional groups, known as Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETIs), to support students who may be struggling with housing insecurity.

Mental Health – Formalize agreements with mental health partners to ease student referrals. Establish a clear plan for communicating the referral process to all faculty and staff with an expectation that there will be an increased need in the fall semester.

Student Workers – Utilize student workers to support enrollment functions (consider live chat and video conferencing from college websites) and to engage with general student success support (consider helping fellow students with accessing technology, how to keep going when struggling in courses, etc.).

United Way 211 – Provide communications to students and employees about the use of 211 as a resource for food insecurity, housing insecurity, mental health support, and other services.

Full On-Ground Reopening

Under this scenario, we recommend that student life and student support service offices offer both remote and on-ground services. General community members accessing the campuses for the use of services (like the library and computers) should be strictly limited. Services requiring complex discussions (such as advising, tutoring and counseling) should be by appointment only and proper safety protocols must be strictly followed. To ensure proper safety measures are in-place, transactional services (such as enrollment services and student accounts) should have plexiglass protective barriers put up and proper distancing in lines should be clearly marked. Spaces traditionally used for socializing should be reconfigured to discourage “hanging out” in close quarters and could be used to offer services. Current shared office spaces may not be

large enough to ensure proper social distancing, so spaces (like a cafeteria or meeting room) could be used to offer services. Spaces to support student learning, such as study areas and open computer labs, should be made available with required safety protocols clearly established.

Supporting the Whole Student

Campus food services – Open food services at campuses for “grab and go” food only. Establish a clear process with plexiglass, clear distancing needed in lines, and other safety precautions. This may require that a new location be established for the food choice and checkout process.

Childcare – Each campus childcare services varies in scope, space and utilization by students and employees, so no broad recommendation for reopening is possible. However, when strictly adhering to established requirements for childcare facilities, campuses who have childcare centers are encouraged to open if possible. Priority should be given to student and employees with children to utilize these services over the general public

Food insecurity – Open food pantries at campuses. Offer “grab and go” bags to minimize the need for students to touch individual items and reduce the amount of time students need to spend in the space.

Supporting Student Learning

Advising, Tutoring and Other Student Support Learning Areas – Offer these services by appointment only. Take appropriate measures through the utilization of PPE, plexiglass shields and cleaning after each meeting.

Disability Support Services – Support recommendations from disability support services experts to ensure student access to services and student life occurs regardless of disability status.

Library – Continue remote support, discourage general study space but allow limited number of students coming in for research, continue to offer services remotely. Offer curbside pickup and drop off and/or robust mailing program for library books and other research materials.

Orientation – Even though the campus will be open, continue to hold new student orientation online. Consider a standardized software platform for consistent orientation engagement process (this purchase is already being discussed statewide).

Student Life – Limit travel and large on-campus events. Consider “grab and go” food and activity options for student engagement. Even though the campus will be open, continue to establish a more robust remote student life program. Encourage student leaders to establish or continue newsletters. Encourage remote synchronous student activities and club meetings. Consider statewide purchase of an “app” or software platform to support remote student engagement. Increase the use of social media for students to engage with college employees and fellow students.

Technology – Ensure open computer lab spaces are available for student learning. Proper social distancing and safety protocols should be strictly followed and this will limit the number of students who will be able to access this technology. Consider limiting the amount of time each student will be able to utilize these computers. Continue to provide technology loans to students, so the need for the use of these on-campus resources can be limited.

Supporting the Completion of Processes

Bursar’s Office, Enrollment Services, Financial Aid, Registrar’s Office, and Other Offices – Offer these services in-person, but continue to increase the ability for students to complete paperwork and processes remotely through digital documents and signatures. Establish appropriate safety protocols, such as plexiglass and clearly marked distancing for lines, and require strict adherence.

Hybrid Reopening

Under this scenario, we recommend that student life and student support service offices continue to primarily offer support remotely. Where there is a need for students to access physical materials (such as food or books), we recommend that “curbside” services or a system of mailing materials to students’ homes be established. We also recommend an increase in the use of consistent software systems for things like online orientation and student social engagement online.

Supporting the Whole Student

Campus food services – Food services would remain closed.

Childcare – On-campus childcare services would remain closed.

Food insecurity – Establish a process for students to access campus food pantries with as much social distancing as possible. Consider curbside pick-up, or mailing grocery cards or food packages to students. Student activity fee dollars or foundation support could be considered to fund these needs.

Supporting Student Learning

Advising, Tutoring and Other Student Support Learning Areas – Continue to offer services remotely. Campuses should consider conducting appointment only in-person sessions utilizing open spaces (such as a cafeteria not in use).

Disability Support Services – Support recommendations from disability support services experts to ensure student access to services and student life occurs regardless of disability status.

Library – Continue to offer services remotely. Offer curbside pickup and drop off and/or robust mailing program for library books and other research materials.

Orientation – Hold new student orientation online. Consider a standardized software platform for consistent orientation engagement process (this purchase is already being discussed statewide).

Student Life – Encourage student leaders to establish or continue newsletters. Encourage remote synchronous student activities and club meetings. Consider statewide purchase of an “app” or software platform to support remote student engagement. Increase the use of social media for students to engage with college employees and fellow students.

Technology – Create clear processes for how to redistribute loaned technology to students that the colleges have already acquired and prepare to purchase additional technology if needed for students.

Supporting the Completion of Processes

Bursar’s Office, Enrollment Services, Financial Aid, Registrar’s Office, and Other Offices – Continue to offer services remotely. Establish clear process for staff to go into the office to process information, as needed. Increase the ability for students to complete paperwork and processes remotely through digital documents and signatures.