**A Problem, a Challenge, and an Opportunity**

A letter to the faculty from Academic Senate President Dan Mitchell

**The Problem**

De Anza has encountered an unanticipated and significant drop in enrollment this fall. The causes are still not all clear, but the potential effects are. This is a very real problem that demands a rapid and effective response from all of us.

**The Challenge**

We must maximize our winter and spring term enrollments in order to recover from the fall term decline, with the goal of achieving annual enrollment rates that will protect current and future funding.

**The Opportunity**

Many steps have already been taken at the institutional level, including increased marketing efforts, extension of online winter quarter enrollment through the end of the winter break, and increased outreach to high schools, to name a few. Faculty members have a special opportunity to directly affect students. An effective faculty response will have important effects on critical issues of student access, retention and success. Join me in focusing on effective strategies at two critical points: the closing days of the current term, and the first weeks of winter quarter.

**This week:**

Right now students are making plans for the winter term and deciding whether to return and what courses to take.

* Encourage students to take advantage of their time in college by taking a few of those "extra" courses in subjects that interest them - even if they are not part of their primary programs.
* Encourage students to look at the catalog or meet with a counselor to design a program that will let them achieve their goals at De Anza and beyond. Suggest course options that logically follow the course you teach. Point out resources for planning their programs - online, in print, and in the counseling department.

**The first two weeks of the winter term:**

* Plan first-day activities that focus on active participation and getting acquainted. Learn names. Ask for questions rather than reading the green sheet. Students' chances for success are greatly affected by what we do at the first class meeting and during the first week. Effective learning is enhanced when students develop a personal connection with the teacher and their peers in the classroom.
* Help students with logistical problems. Many of them are confused during the first week - often by problems that you can help with. Offer to be their advocates and help them locate information and campus resources.
* Give students feedback on their work during the first week or two. Return graded work and discuss the results. Provide suggestions for overcoming problems on the early assignments. Potentially successful students who are unsure of where they stand in your class may drop.
* Conduct a first-day survey to help identify students with special issues or needs that may affect their chances for success.

Let's join as faculty colleagues to make student access, retention, and success the themes for the rest of this year. While we must do this for practical budget reasons right now, the benefits of this focus extend far beyond this immediate practical concern.

Dan Mitchell, President   
De Anza College Academic Senate