TO: Dean Patrick Jefferson  
Dean Oscar Cobian  
Dr. Allison Moore  

FROM: Dr. Angelita F. Salas  

DATE: September 26, 2013 (revised from July 17, 2013)  

RE: Report on the AskACounselor@lasc.edu email Pilot program implemented for the Spring 2013 semester  

The AskACounselor (AAC) email counseling program was created to assist in part with the 2012 Accreditation Report recommendation number three:

College Recommendation 3

In order to meet the Standard, the team recommends that the College review the availability of appropriate, comprehensive and reliable services to all students. In particular the team urges the College to review the parity of services provided to students in distance education compared to students on campus.

A pilot program using the mail account of askacounselor@lasc.edu was designed as one of the ways to address the issue of counseling parity with land-based, on campus students and on-line students. Primarily AAC allowed students who were enrolled off-campus/on-line to email any quick-question inquiries and a Counselor would provide an answer (usually within 48-72 hours). The Counselor currently assigned to answer the emails is at an FTE assignment of .2.

The askacounselor@lasc.edu pilot program ran between the dates of February 1, 2013 to June 30, 2013 (it is still currently ongoing), with approximately 305 distinct emails received and responded to.

AAC was marketed to all students on campus via posters, email blasts, the web page, and the marquee. While the goal was to encourage LASC students to use this service, many inquiries were also received from students within the LACCD, outside of the district and internationally (e.g., the Philippines, Belize, Asian countries).

The AAC pilot program at this time was not designed to complete Student Education Plans (SEP), make appointments, or conduct personal or career counseling. Students inquiring of these services were encouraged to contact the Counseling office and schedule an appointment.

Table 1 lists the number of emails and the type of inquiries that were received. All emails were answered regardless of the inquiry. Chart 1 is pie-chart visual of Table 1.
**EMAILS Received**

Sample of inquiries emailed to askacounselor@lasc.edu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Information</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Information International</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments (making one via email)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA/AS degrees offered</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist.org</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates Offered</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Petitions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Information</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisite waivers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. Items**</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL Emails</strong></td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

![Chart 1](chart1.png)
Miscellaneous email inquiries included information relating to the following:

- "W" deadline dates
- 3rd repeat information
- AB540 applications/financial aid/information
- Academic renewal
- Campus phone numbers/emails for faculty
- Etudes (how to set up, instructor information)
- Completion of an "I" (incomplete)
- GED completion
- Transcript review (other colleges/universities and international)
- Graduation information (dates, gowns, etc.)
- High school student questions (counseling, transfer, etc.)
- Athletics
- Schedule of classes
- Catalog
- Registration appointment times
- SIS assistance (where to go, logging in, etc).
- Special Programs: TRIO, GAIN, DSPS, EOPS
- Veterans services

Petitions

Many students had inquires regarding Associate and Certificate programs, general education requirements for programs and transfer institutions, schedule of classes, current catalog, etc. Almost every one of these items is available on the LASC.edu webpage in a WORD document or PDF format. However, students were still emailed the item they were requesting along with the link to the web address for future reference.

A list of the most requested petitions for majors and certificates and forms emailed is noted.

Certificates:
- Business
- Chemical dependency
- CAOT

Majors:
- Admin Justice
- Business
- Child Dev
- Psychology
- Electronics
- Geography
- IDS
- Liberal Arts
Other petitions emailed to students included:

- Extenuating circumstances
- Academic renewal
- LACCD Email set up information
- Current schedule
- Current catalog
- Orientation schedule

Chart 2 lists the number of California State University, University of California, Nursing and Associate general education requirement forms (Plan A and B) were emailed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education Petitions emailed</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan A</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan B</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU-GE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGETC</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Counseling assistance was by far the largest area of inquiry. Many students wanted assistance with educational plans, but were reminded that AAC was not able to assist them at this time with designing a plan and to please meet with a Counselor.

This is a sample of the inquiries received that require a meeting with a Counselor:
- Educational plans
- Transfer information
- Choosing majors
- Financial aid appeals
- Transcript evaluation
- Course waivers
- Graduation/certificate petitions
- Registration
- Releasing holds
- Dropping classes
- Academic renewal

Questions regarding Instructors included:
- Room location
- Email/contact information
- Office hours
- Etudes

International students had inquiries related to:
- TOEFL
- SAT scores
- Admissions
- Fees
- Transcript evaluation

Financial aid inquiries included:
- Applying (FAFSA assistance)
- Where to go (office hours)
- Summer aid
- BOGG
- AB540
- Appeals

Nursing inquiries were related to:
- Application procedures
- Repetition of courses
- Prerequisite waivers
- LVN to RN option
- Foreign transcript evaluation
Orientation
- Assessments needed
- Hours and location of the office

Prerequisite waiver requests for:
- PE
- Science
- Math
- Writing

Veterans
- Assistance with classes
- Counseling
- Financial aid

Miscellaneous questions and inquiries included:
- Fee payments
- Post baccalaureate registration
- Tuition (costs)
- Waiver of PE class
- Taking a “W” in a class
- CLEP credit
- Completion of “I” (Incompletes)
- AB540 – application/criteria
- Address change (how and where to change it)
- Appointments (wanting to make one via email)
- AS-T info
- Career Center (location, services offered)
- Certificate completion
- GED completion
- Degree petition submission dates (graduation dates and posting of degree)
- Bookstore/prices of books
- Campus info (phone numbers)
Besides sending an email directly to askacounselor@lasc.edu, students also had the option of using a separate email program called JotForm that is accessible from the Counseling webpage: http://www.lasc.edu/students/counseling/contact_counselor.html

JotForm (a free on-line form creation program) includes a drop down menu (“Contact Your Counselor”) with the Counselors names and their departments: General Counseling, EOPS, DSPS, TRIO Scholars, TRIO STEM, Nursing, PASSAGES, and Matriculation. A student could email their Counselor directly with a question or inquiry. Or, if they did not have a Counselor (“Not sure who your Counselor is”), they could send an email directly to the askacounselor@lasc.edu account for a response. Of the over 300 emails received, almost 50 were sent via the JotForm account.
Survey Monkey assessment for pilot study (February 2013 – June 2013)

A month into the pilot program, the first Survey Monkey focus group email was completed in March, 2013. There were 8 responses.

A second Survey Monkey focus group email was completed in July 2013 with the following results:

An email was sent to approximately 300 students who had sent in a question to AAC to please complete the following survey (http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RQFGX6K).

Questions asked:

1. How did you hear of the AskACounselor service?
2. Was the response time to your question adequate?
3. Were you satisfied with the answer to your question(s)?
4. Would you recommend AskACounselor service to other students?
5. Would you use the AskACounselor service again?
6. Are you a student who primarily takes courses on-line (Etudes) and/or in ITV?
7. Finally, please let us know now what we can do to improve the AskACounselor service.

Fourteen students responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LASC Website</td>
<td>79.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Blast</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1
Question 2

Were you satisfied with the answer to your question(s)?

Answer Choices | Responses
--- | ---
Yes | 69.23% 9
No | 23.68% 3
N/A | 7.69% 1
Total | 13

Question 3
Would you recommend the AskA Counselor service to other students?

Answered: 13  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4

Would you use the AskA Counselor service again?

Answered: 13  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 5
I added this question from the previous survey that was sent out. One of the requirements was parity of services for our on-line and on campus students. An idea of which students were using the AAC service was needed.
Every email that was submitted received a reply. A concern that we do not have control over is that responses will be forwarded to a “spam” folder.

A further concern is the limited Counseling hours for evening students as referenced by one of the comments. This was also brought up a few times in the emails as a difficulty for students to get to campus for an appointment and/or the challenge of making one.
Summary

The issues that seemed to come up the most that students wanted assistance with were:

- **Creation of educational plans**
  - Not possible yet on AAC (due to confidentiality, no access to database, transcripts, etc).

- **Availability of Counselors in the evenings.**
  - Office may close too soon for many to make it to campus.

- **Scheduling appointments**
  - On-line schedule link still not up and running for students to schedule their own appointments.

- **Obtaining career and major counseling**
  - Similar to creation of SEP, not possible to have in-depth “real-time” conversations with the students to discuss educational objectives.

Suggestions

I would suggest that the AAC be continued as it is a valuable tool that many current, former and potential students utilized. AAC answered many questions and inquiries and forwarded petitions to students and may have kept the student from having to come to campus to get a petition, or wait for an appointment to have a quick question answered.

Another suggestion would be to have a more prominent placement of the AskACounselor program on the main webpage. It was previously located on the main page’s rotating screen, but as of right now it has been removed. The only link to this is on the Counseling webpage.