

The Triple Check: Census, Fraud, and Financial Aid Simplified

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AGENDA

- Admissions & Records Perspective
- Student Financial Services Perspective

THE IMPORTANCE OF CENSUS

- Official deadline for verifying student enrollment
- Impacts college funding and state reporting
- CA Education Code 5 § 58004 requires faculty to clear the roster of inactive students, including those who no show, do not participate, or stop participating in your classes (in-person or online)

INSTRUCTOR ROLE IN CENSUS

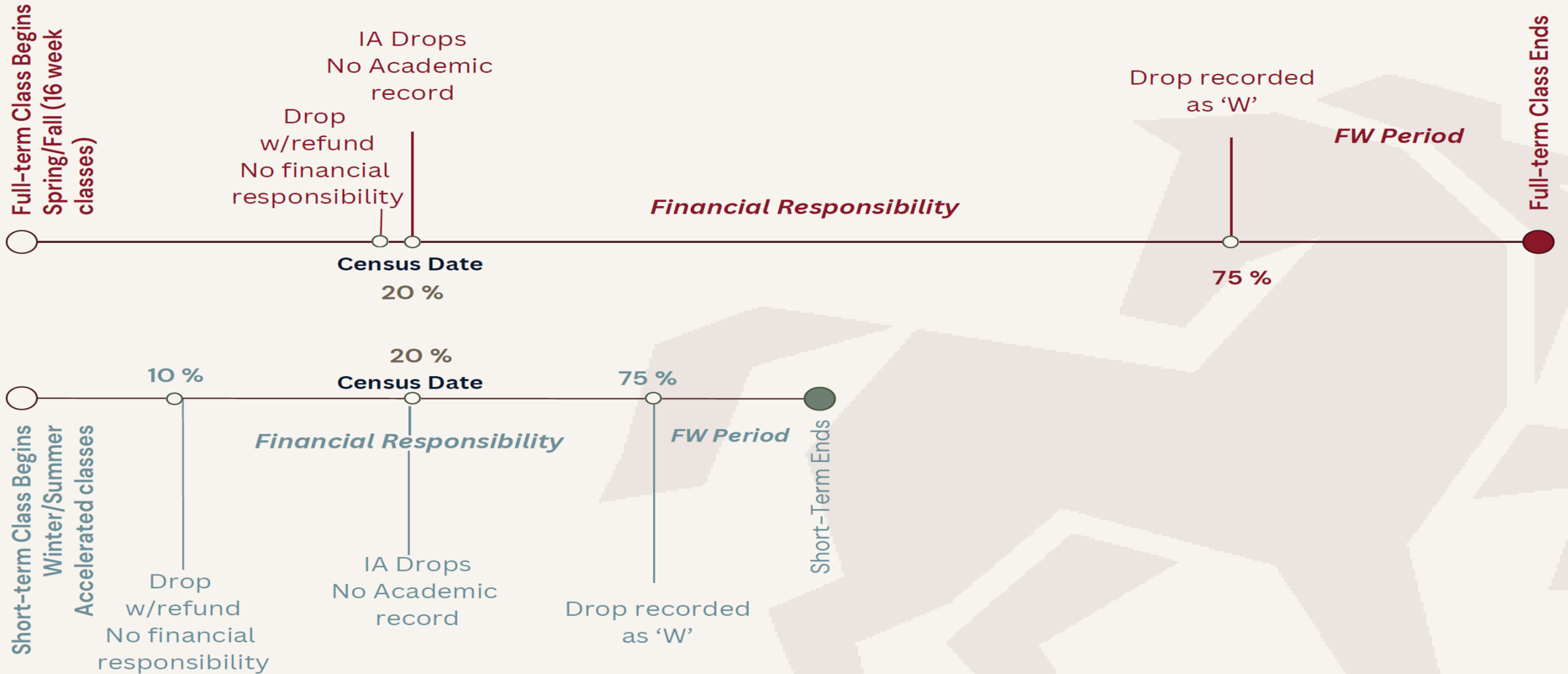
- Faculty are encouraged to implement regular check-ins, academically rigorous activities, especially for online courses
- Accurately record attendance and participation
- Submit census rosters on time
- Drop non-participating students

COURSE TIMELINE



NORCO
COLLEGE

Enrollment Services



INFORMATION GUIDE FOR FACULTY | ATTENDANCE

Notation	Description	What does this mean?	What do I need to do?
NS	No Show	A 'No-Show' refers to a student who fails to attend the first class session (in-person/online) or does not participate in the course prior to census.	For students who have not shown up/participated by the census date, please mark them as no-shows. This helps the institution ensure only those actively participating in the course are enrolled.
IA	Inactive at Census (Drop for Census)	The official deadline for determining enrollment and attendance data for state funding purposes and for the official course roster.	Confirm the enrollment status of each student by the census date. Drop any student who has not attended or attended and stopped participating.
W	Withdrawal	Assigned to students who officially withdraw from the course by the established deadline.	Before the Withdrawal Deadline, ensure students are aware of the deadlines and procedures for dropping your course.
FW	Failure to Withdraw	Assigned to students who stopped attending AFTER the deadline to withdraw and have not completed sufficient coursework to justify an F grade.	Enter 'FW' grade during the final grading window, as applicable.
F	Fail	Assigned to students who have not met the course requirements. It indicates a lack of satisfactory performance throughout the course.	Enter 'F' grade during the final grading window, as applicable.

SCENARIO

- Maria, a student enrolled in a semester-long history course, actively attended class and participated in discussions during the first few weeks. After the census date, she stopped attending entirely without providing any communication to the instructor. Despite several outreach attempts from the instructor, Maria never responded, did not submit any further assignments, and missed all exams. There is no evidence of her participation beyond the early weeks of the term.

Why FW Makes Sense:

- **lack of participation after census**
- **unofficial withdrawal**
- **federal compliance**

CENSUS, ENROLLMENT, & GRADING

- Add Codes
 - activate on 1st day of the term
 - override course capacity, but not requisites
- Late Adds
 - exception, not standard practice
 - by approving, instructor is confirming attendance prior to census
 - form is available in A&R
- Extenuating Circumstances
 - accident, illness, or circumstances beyond student control
 - common appeals include students petitioning W and FW grades

FRAUD UPDATE

- Admissions Application Fraud
 - “bad actors” with no intent to attend college for educational purposes
 - CCCApply uses ID.ME
- Enrollment Fraud
 - no intent to attend or complete coursework
- Financial Aid Fraud
 - act of attempting to collect financial aid to which the applicant is not legally entitled

METHODS OF FRAUD

- Bot Fraud
 - automated scripts, AI, and humans
- Fraud Ring
 - treat fraud as a business
- Fraud Scouts
 - enroll using real/fake identities to collect class materials for future fraud
- Professional Fraudsters
 - enroll with intent to do minimal effort and collect financial aid

FRAUD MITIGATION EFFORTS

- 1st Level = CCCApply Spam Filter/ID.ME/Monthly Reporting to CCCCCO
- 2nd Level = District IT
- 3rd Level = Admissions & Records/Student Financial Services
- 4th Level = Faculty

The Influence of Instructors on Student Financial Aid Outcomes

Addressing No-Show Students, Census Date, &
Fraud in Online Classes



The Instructor's Role in Financial Aid

- Instructors play a critical role in ensuring financial aid compliance with dates, grades, attendance (first two weeks for on campus) etc
- Reporting accurate enrollment impacts student eligibility & federal funding a great deal
- Failing to drop inactive students can lead to fraudulent financial aid claims and have a negative financial impact on students
- Making sure the date of withdrawal is documented and based off academic engagement; further defined in later slide
- Utilizing the appropriate grade based off each unique situation when students stop attending (earned F vs unearned F)



No-Show's & Student Financial Aid Eligibility

Definition of No-Show:

- Fails to attend any class meetings (for in-person courses).
- Does not academically engage (for online courses), such as submitting assignments, taking quizzes, or engaging in discussions.
- Does not provide any indication of intent to remain enrolled before the census date.

Impact on Financial Aid

- Aid is disbursed based off enrollment (number of credits); non-attending students receive funds they are technically not eligible to receive.
- We disburse the first 50% of funds the first week of the term based off units enrolled; the first two weeks are very important to minimize any overpayments to students.
- Once Census arrives, we pay the remaining eligibility based off the units locked on that date; if rosters are not cleared, our disbursement is paid erroneously



Census Date & Why It Matters

- What is Census in relation to Financial Aid?
 - *It is the day in which we “lock” student units and determine final eligibility with Federal, State and Chancellor’s Office funding sources*
 - *We fund students based off those units in the expectation they have been participating in class and plan on staying in their courses*
 - *We find that when students completely withdrawal from their courses, especially towards the end of the semester we see courses they were enrolled in at Census, backdated either prior to Census or prior to the start of term*

A decorative graphic of two stylized leaf branches, one above the other, rendered in a light gray color. The leaves are simple, elongated shapes with a central vein and a small notch at the tip. They are arranged in a fan-like pattern, extending from the left side of the slide towards the center.

Backdating Courses Tied to No Show's

- Backdating is something that impacts our students a great deal and creates unnecessary balances which prevent future enrollment at our school and any other institution.
- When an instructor backdates a student to the beginning of the term and or any point prior to the Census date, it creates “overpayments” of federal aid and sometimes state aid.
- During Census, we take a “snapshot” of enrollment and lock it in with the Feds, State and Local aid providers, which is almost a contract for the student and the entities providing financial support.
- In my experience, the backdating of courses is something the instructor does to help the student but in most situations it will negatively impact the student; with knowledge we gain power, which is why I always work with instruction to help understand Financial Aid in relation to courses.

Combatting Fraud; Financial Aid's Role

- Financial Aid was the original gate keeper against fraud due to the unique verifications we perform and the systems we have in place to “flag” and “hold” suspected fraudulent applications
- Recently, with the large data breaches, we have found that fraudsters are getting past us, Admissions and now entering the Classroom
- The FAFSA application is now tied to the IRS directly; the data is also passed through four other federal databases for validity
- We are reviewing lists sent from the District varying from 5 to 2000 students on a regular basis. The lists are compiled when the “applicant” meets certain data points; unusual address, IP address, timing of application submission, sequential ID’s etc
- We are selecting those students for a heightened level of Verification and review documents submitted for accuracy & legitimacy
- We work directly with Admissions and coordinate based off the reports they are reviewing for fraud
- The percentage of people selected as fraud, who are real, fall in single digit percentages

Ways to Mitigate Fraud & Increase Engagement

Unfortunately, the CCC's have seen an increase in enrollment fraud across the system. The CCCCO attempts to identify bots within the CCCApply application process and the colleges try to catch them within the colleges application. However, they can still get into your course. From the first day of class onward, our faculty are the ones who are best at detecting fraudulent students.

Here are some best practices we have seen work in the financial aid community:

- Start your course with several varied assignments intended for students to initially engage in the course within the first day or two. For example:
 - An introduction discussion where they post a picture of their favorite hobby,
 - an assignment that requires them to upload their profile picture,
 - a syllabus quiz,
 - a discussion about what they are most excited to learn about,
- By adding several of these low stakes assignments during the first two weeks, you are engaging students and reducing the chance that a bot will complete the assignments.
- For additional tips, review: [ASCCC How Student Engagement Can Mitigate Enrollment FraudLinks to an external site.](#)

Monitoring Student Behavior

- **Unusual Log-in Patterns:**

- Frequent logins from multiple IP addresses or locations.
- Inconsistent activity times, such as logging in at odd hours for the region.

- **Submission Patterns:**

- Multiple students submitting identical or highly similar work.
- Submissions that appear AI-generated or copied from other sources.
- Rapid submissions of assignments without engagement in discussions or course materials.

- **Participation Red Flags:**

- Lack of meaningful engagement in discussions (e.g., generic or nonsensical responses).
- Sudden increase in participation right before financial aid disbursement dates.

Trust Your Instincts & Report Suspicious Activity

- If something feels “off” trust your gut because you are most likely correct



- If you notice multiple students using the same writing style or language
- Multiple students submitting assignments at the same time or within minutes of one another
- Please know we are there for you and please do not hesitate to contact A&R & Financial Aid about your concerns; we are a team and we will mitigate the fraud by working together instead of apart



Thank you

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