

SRJC Presentation:

My name is Melita Combs I work at Sonoma County Juvenile Hall as a Juvenile Correctional Counselor III. I work on our higher education unit and have spent the past year working with the Second Chance Program to build our relationship and streamline services and educational supports for youth who are in custody. I have a quote from 1 of my students which says....

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“I feel like attending second chance has helped guide me in the right direction. It is stressful being incarcerated and we have no control over scheduling. It would be very helpful to have priority 1 registration so that those of us going through stressful circumstances, family loses, foster care and attending second chance can get into the classes we need.”

Now... over the past year I have worked daily with these students who are interested turning their futures into something different. Many of these students have never imagined they would even attend college. Navigating college is complicated and finding the appropriate resources can be so overwhelming that giving up is easier. With many things in the system changing so has the age of youth that we serve. With the increasing age comes the requirement for more supports.

As I stated before we are an institution and with that comes restrictions and expectations. One of our biggest barriers is scheduling conflicts and the expectations we are held to. We do our best to meet each youth's individual needs and as you can imagine that can be particularly difficult for education. Our school hours are Monday through Friday 08:30am to 12:45pm. We then add the title 15 requirements, which require we provide the youth with 1 hour of large muscle exercise, 1 hour of programming and 1 hour of leisure. As you can see, we quickly run out of hours in the day.

Our need to keep the youth's online access during school hours is to assure that they are having safe online use and are appropriately supervised. The time restrictions make the need for priority 1 registration extremely sought after as online classes fill up much quicker than traditional classes.

Another student wrote that...→

“Being a second chance student can be frustrating at times. One of the most stressful times in a semester is during class registration. Being incarcerated poses challenges in finding classes that work with my facilities schedule and classes that are completely online. Having priority 1 registration would help us register for those classes that do meet our facilities requirements. Having the ability to be some of the first to register for classes will help alleviate that stress. We appreciate your consideration”

This student originally had no interest in college classes and refused to entertain the idea for some time. A year later he now wants to become a mechanical engineer and has obtained A's in all of his classes including pre-calculus and chemistry. As you can see the Second Chance Program and increased access to higher education has already started to change the future. Thank you for your time.