

Subject: Background information about our Family Engagement Institute (FEI) and next steps
Date: Thursday, December 8, 2022 at 9:01:03 AM Pacific Standard Time
From: Bernadine Fong
To: foothill
CC: centralservices
Attachments: FEI Message.pdf

Dear college community,

While many of you may have read the unfortunate news from our Family Engagement Institute (FEI) Executive Director, Betsy Nikolchev, that FEI will be sunsetting at the end of this academic year, I want to personally deliver and elaborate on this news and recognize the pain and difficulty our FEI team members Betsy and Carmen Ponce are experiencing related to this decision. The unfortunate news is that due to a lack of additional long-term grant-funding, FEI will not continue as currently configured. This is a very difficult decision, and the impact to our members of the FEI team is devastating, and I want to recognize and honor the outstanding contributions they have made to our college community and to our undocumented students and families, in particular. However, the mission of FEI as a college bridge program for first-generation students and their families will continue.

To provide some background to this decision, the FEI was supported by a Heising-Simons Foundation grant of over \$6 million for the last 12 years; essentially, this program was supported by a cost of \$500K per year. Since I returned to Foothill a year ago, I was alerted to the upcoming funding shortfall by our Foundation as the grant will be fully expended by the end of this quarter. To at least continue the program through June 30th, we are using one-time college funds (\$140,000). However, for the long term, we are launching a new center (as already noted in Betsy's letter, attached), that will focus on first generation students and their families. The mission of FEI will be institutionalized within the college and part of our normal operating budget. Our VP of Student Services, Laurie Scolari, is leading this effort as part of building a Latinx/BIPOC/Dream (exact name to be determined) community center. However, the current operational and management overhead of the program will be reduced and supervision of the program will be absorbed into the college's current administrative structure (with no new management positions added). The plans for FEI's integration into the college structure have been over a year in development and many options were explored to transition this donor-funded program into a permanent college-funded program without impacting other college needs and resources. Nevertheless, the impact of reducing our management staff in this area is painful, and we recognize they are going through a very difficult time with this decision.

There were extensive conversations with others about the future of FEI and its financial viability, including: 1) how to reconsider the course work so the program generates more apportionment; 2) reviewing possible categorical funding that might apply; 3) considering reinstating a summer youth program as an extension of FEI and also as a revenue/apportionment generator; 4) meeting with our outside consultant on how to restructure FEI's contract fees, as he thought they were too low; 5) meeting with student services leadership on the idea of a new center. In the end, the last option was the only viable and realistic choice. However, the new center's objectives include:

- Work for undocumented students as per state guidelines
- Explore Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status (this is based on both Latinx enrollment and Pell grant participation)
- Develop a student Dreamer club
- Align Latinx initiatives across the college
- Create a strategic plan with a Latinx lens for the college

We will honor the contracts that FEI has with local school districts, but will reframe our services to these districts. To honor Betsy's wishes, we are sunsetting the name "FEI," though the same populations will continue to be served. Finally, and most importantly, we are going to more intentionally integrate the services provided with instructional career programs so that FEI parents who are English language learners can have the option to participate in some of our workforce programs which do not have high language barriers, such as our newly resurrected home health aides program (for which there is high demand and pays \$35 an hour plus overtime), and our food service language training program. In addition, our FEI high school students will be supported with more dual enrollment opportunities and more opportunities to spend time on the Foothill campus and participate in Foothill programs with the specific goal of creating more defined pathways into college and careers.

Lastly, I want to emphasize that Betsy and Carmen will be supported as they continue in their roles through the end of the academic year, and as the college reorganizes to serve the mission of the programs and services it provides through other structures.

Best regards,

Bernadine

Bernadine Chuck Fong, Ph.D.

Interim President, Foothill College

Senior Scholar and Director of Leadership Initiatives, Stanford University



FOOTHILL COLLEGE

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INSTITUTE



Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Community,

It is with deep sadness and a heavy heart that Carmen, Pauline and I announce the sunsetting of the Family Engagement Institute (FEI) this coming June. FEI has been self-funded, reliant on grants and fee-for-service dollars since its inception twelve years ago. However, future funding has become significantly difficult to secure to ensure the sustainability of FEI beyond June 2023.

It has been the greatest honor to work with our Foothill colleagues, community partners, students and families to serve, learn, lead, and grow together on our journey to advance equity and inspire aspirations of college-going identity for first-generation students and families. The legacy of our work lives on in you!

FEI's work for undocumented students will remain intact as it is funded by the California Community College State Chancellors Office and will be transitioned to the Student Service division under the direction of Dr. Laurie Scolari, Vice President of Student Services. In addition, Dr. Scolari will launch a campus BIPOC (Black Indigenous, People of Color) Center which will include a Dreamers/Undocually space on campus. More to come as details unfold and Dr. Scolari welcomes your input and innovative ideas for that new endeavor.

Please reach out with any questions and know how much you are valued.

In appreciation, gratitude, community, and love,

Betsy Nikolchev

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Nikolchev".

Executive Director, FEI