

**To:** DSOs at SEVP-certified California Community Colleges  
**Date:** July 22, 2011  
**Re:** Full Course of Study: California Community Colleges in Crisis  
**Number:** 1103-04

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**Comment:**

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**Background:**

Due to significant budget decreases in 2008-09, California’s community colleges did not have the resources or capacity to accommodate a full course load for each student in their school system. As a result, F-1 nonimmigrant students studying at these schools had trouble maintaining visa status. Unable to enroll in a full course load as required by Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) regulations to maintain lawful status and despite their intention and attempts to do so, students were compelled to violate immigration law. This placed them at risk for penal action by immigration officials. SEVP worked with the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) to ameliorate immediate consequences for students who had no other recourse.

On October 2, 2009, SEVP Director Lou Farrell issued a formal decision that was effective only for the fall 2009 term only. The decision made provision for F-1 students enrolled in SEVP-certified California community colleges to enroll in the number of credits certified by their designated school officials (DSOs) as a full course of study (as opposed to a minimum of 12 credit hours). That DSO certification included the following limits:

- Include at least one course (three credit hours) per term requiring physical presence at the college
- Permit counting more than one online course toward meeting the full course of study requirement, as opposed to the current maximum identified in the regulations<sup>1</sup>
- Not count conditions described in the previous two bullets toward limits otherwise placed on reduced course load<sup>2</sup> (i.e., the director’s decision allowed reduced course load only for F-1 students enrolled in one of the SEVP-certified California community colleges).

**Update:**

The SEVP director’s decision applied specifically to the fall 2009 term, with review and proposal for renewal each subsequent term as deemed necessary and by request of the CCCCCO.

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<sup>1</sup> [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(i\)\(G\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(iii\)](#)

The CCCCCO chose not to renew these provisions in spring 2010. They have not been applicable to any term since the conclusion of the fall 2009 term.

All F-1 students enrolled in any of California's community colleges, therefore, must meet full course of study requirements directed in regulation, without amendment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>[8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(B\)](#)