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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
LIZZY RAGER

MANAGING EDITOR &
PHOTO EDITOR
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MARCUS THOMPSON

DESIGN MENTOR
JENNIFER SNOOK

STUDENT ASSISTANT
NEZRIN HASANLY

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3000 Campus Hill Drive, Livermore, CA 94551-9797
tel.: 925-424-1240 fax: 925-606-5317
e-mail: LPCExpress@laspositascollege.edu
web: www.lpcexpressnews.com
newsroom: Room 2409



Fake students are taking course spots

Financial aid fraud rings are more affluent than ever at Las Positas

By Lizzy Rager

@RAGERLIZZY

Half of the students in your class may not be real.

A spot you may have needed for your major. A spot for a class with a professor you love. A spot that could've saved you a half-hour drive from home to Las Positas.

Unfortunately, financial aid fraud rings are the cause to this capacity issue. Fraud is a recurring issue for Las Positas every year and is especially problematic this semester.

According to Andi Schreiberman, a financial aid officer at Las Positas since 1987, from 2021 to 2022, 666 students were flagged as fraudulent, and through this academic year, 221. Two weeks into spring, there are a suspected 100 to 200 fraudulent students taking up spots in classes – the largest group Las Positas has ever caught wind of.

“As you start peeling back, suddenly, it leads you somewhere else...What started out to be about 20 fraudulent students in the class turned out to be well over 100,”

-ANDI SCHREIBMAN

Not only does this affect students, but taxpayers. Taxpayer money is being awarded to illegitimate receivers. Using the average cost per semester at LPC from 2021-22, this semester up to \$110,400 in federal financial aid could have been awarded to fake students who enrolled at Las Positas.

Colleges have to return any federal financial aid paid out fraudulently, even if they can't track down the student and recoup the funds. Schreiberman says Las Positas has not awarded any financial aid to fraudulent studies, to the best of their knowledge. This does not mean they haven't, though.

In January, Mary Lauffer, a business professor, noticed an unusual number of students enrolled in her classes, Business Communications and Work Experience.

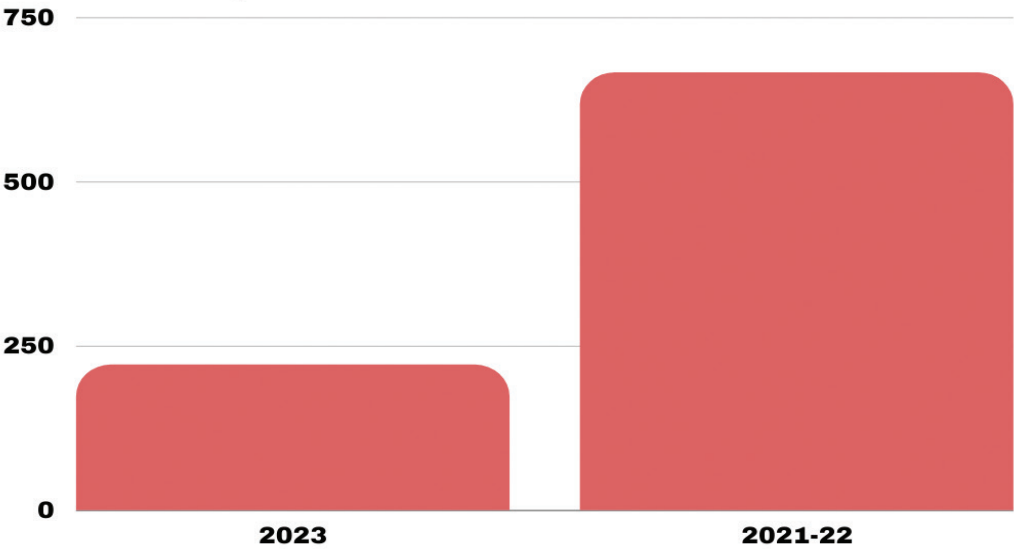
“These courses typically have high enrollment, but enrollment generally increases more gradually. This one-day giant jump, which filled one of my Work Experience sections, was the first tip-off to possible fraud,” Lauffer said.

Lauffer informed Schreiberman of the activity, who then notified LPC faculty and began an investigation. Schreiberman says the process is like unpeeling an onion.

“As you start peeling back, suddenly, it leads you somewhere else. And then that leads you somewhere else. And suddenly, what started out to be about 20 fraudulent students in the class turned out to be well over 100,” Schreiberman said.

Faculty are key in reporting anomalies to the Financial Aid office since the officers are not able to spot them until FAFSA, Free Application for Federal Student Aid,

Number of flagged fraudulent students by academic year



Data provided by LPC Financial Aid Office
Infographic by Lizzy Rager

forms are received. Common patterns of fraud include similar email patterns, sudden jumps in enrollment, untypical class sizes than semesters past and email names that do not match the student names.

When a student is suspected of fraud at Las Positas, Admissions & Records sends an email asking for the student's government-issued ID and a second supporting document, like a utility bill with a name and address, within a 24-hour window. If they are identified as fraudulent, they are dropped from classes, their account is put on hold so they cannot enroll and they do not receive aid from Las Positas.

“Neither Las Positas or any other college has the means to identify the individuals who use fake emails. Currently, only the Office of Inspector General can attempt to do that by investigating IP addresses and using other means,” said Jeff Lawes, an Admissions & Records officer.

Even if Las Positas catches a fraudulent student, however, they can still apply to multiple community colleges. Lawes says there is currently “no central repository of fraudulent IDs from all the colleges.”

Typically, these students come in groups, called fraud rings, and follow orders from a ring leader. The rings apply to community colleges since there is a low barrier to entry, and the tuition is comparatively cheap to four-years. If the fraudulent student was awarded a Pell Grant, for example, they could receive an amount that exceeded the cost of tuition to make a profit.

These individuals do not use their real identities, but rather, stolen ones. However, prisoners sometimes give out personal information for use. As long as a real name, Social Security Number and birthdate are present, FAFSA will process the application.

According to the Las Positas 2022-23 Financial Aid Policies, students discovered as fraudulent “will be reported to the U.S. Office of Inspector General for a federal investigation,” “will be required to repay all funds received” and “may be prosecuted for a felony, fined up to \$20,000 and put in prison.”

Las Positas has seen its fair share of fraud rings. In 2012, the Las Positas Financial Aid office and the Office of Inspector General, a state-wide agency, conducted a thorough investigation and busted a fraud ring run out of Stockton. The ring leaders were arrested and had to pay a large fine.

“This has been going on for a long time. These rings are very prevalent in California, and they have been for over the last 15 years or so. But it's getting worse all the time as they get more sophisticated,” Schreiberman said.

In 2021, 20% of traffic on the CCC Apply website was bot-related, according to the Chancellor's office. Lawes says Las Positas has no way to track how much activity is bot-related on the website, but the Financial Aid office has systems in place to filter out fraudulent students.

These systems, however, are costly, and community colleges are better able to combat fraud depending on their program funding. One student caught at Las Positas could go to another and slip through the cracks.

“We are hopeful that the Chancellor's Office will be paying for this at the state level rather than requiring the colleges themselves,” Schreiberman said.

While faculty are advised by the Financial Aid office to drop students if they do not show up for the first day of class, this does not always occur. Fraudulent students are the reason some classes are able to reach a class enrollment quota. In addition, some students log in to Canvas to seem like they are legitimate.

Schreiberman says this issue needs to be tackled at the CCC Apply, or California Community College Apply website, level.

“The state really needs to put a better-coordinated effort together, where we share these identities, and they put a hold on it at the state level,” Schreiberman said.

Most importantly, this issue impacts Las Positas students.

“They have the audacity to take up seats and keep real students from being able to get into them. And that's what people should know about,” Schreiberman said.

Career Center guides students to their goals

The Career Center can give you all the resources you need to pursue your career



Lizzy Rager/Express

In the Career Center, Kristi Vanderhoof conducts a mock interview with freshman biology student Aarushi Manja on February 2, 2023. Mock interviews are what one of the resources the Career Center provides.

By Jude Strzemp

@JSTRZEMP

Flipping a grad cap's tassel from right to left, students initiate themselves into a new job market: a job market where having a degree doesn't necessarily guarantee a position and there is plenty of competition for dream careers.

Obviously, navigating this job market is not always straightforward.

Students at Las Positas College can get a head start in their careers by going to the Career Center, located in Room 1604 as part of the Career and Transfer Center. Here, Kristi Vanderhoof, the Career Center Coordinator and the author's previous instructor, helps students and alumni navigate job and internship opportunities in SmartShop Workshops and one-on-one meetings.

Being aware of available resources may be the first step in utilizing the Career Center resources. And a simple email or visit to the Career Center might help change a career trajectory.

Vanderhoof struggled with the job market at the beginning of her career too. After graduating from University of California, Santa Cruz, she returned to a deli job that she'd worked at before earning her degree. As a student, she did not go to her college's career center.

"I feel like if I had gone to the Career Center, I might have known, been more prepared and (I) might have done an internship," Vanderhoof said.

She used her story to encourage students to go to the

Las Positas Career Center as early as possible.

"Your career starts now. And it's not something that you think about after you graduate," Vanderhoof said. "It's something that you are working on right now."

Students and alumni have many opportunities to attend the Career Center's SmartShops, workshops that help improve their résumé writing, interviewing skills and job fair preparedness.

April Beam, a returning student who attended a SmartShop called "Winning Résumés (Résumé Building)," appreciated the SmartShop's accommodating schedule.

"Everything that they have to offer, there's flexibility to it. They offer it multiple times," Beam said. "So if you didn't make it this time, you know there's going to be another one."

In fact, the "Winning Résumés" SmartShop was offered four times throughout the fall 2022 semester.

Andrei Nicole Sebastian, a student at Las Positas, attended "Interviewing with Confidence" in preparation for a fall 2022 job fair on campus. An employer from the fair later offered her a marketing internship. She credited club involvement and SmartShops for skills that students use at Job Fairs, in a written statement.

For students and alumni who miss SmartShops or would like more career guidance, one-on-one sessions with Vanderhoof can help clarify career goals, reveal career resources and more.

One of these resources the Career Center promotes is Handshake, an internship and job board. Students and alumni can join almost one thousand students from

Chabot College and Las Positas College to access internship and job opportunities from 4,000 employers seeking current and graduated students.

In addition, the Career Center can help students and alumni set up or revise their LinkedIn profiles. LinkedIn is a networking website, partially purposed with connecting employers and potential employees. LinkedIn currently hosts more than 18,000 Las Positas College alumni.

When students and alumni finally get that interview with their dream employer, they can practice mock interviews with Vanderhoof to prepare for the real thing. With years of experience at the Tri-Valley Career Center, an East Bay-based resource center, Vanderhoof asks industry-relevant questions during the mock interview and offers feedback about how to improve as an interviewee.

For students who are unsure about what career to pursue, the Career Center encourages students to use Career Coach, a free career assessment on the Las Positas College website, and the Tri-Valley Career Center.

Through the Career Center, Vanderhoof offers resources that can help students and alumni pursue careers and internships: résumé writing, online networking and more. Whether exploring career paths or preparing for an interview, going to the Career Center is a great way to build your career-readiness early.

"I would advise you to not do what I did, where you're struggling right up to graduation" Vanderhoof said. "Come to the Career Center early and get prepared so that you'll be ready to launch when you graduate."

Dream Center Coordinator gives students sense of belonging

By Natalie Kruger

@_NATALIE_KRUGER

At 11 years old, Miguel Pimentel and his siblings left Puruarán in Michoacán, Mexico, to reunite with their parents in the United States after being separated for two years. Pimentel and his siblings immigrated to the United States as undocumented children, an experience that would motivate Pimentel for the rest of his life.

Pimentel's professional and personal experiences with the struggles of navigating academia as an undocumented student have led him to LPC's new Dream Center, room 1018. Pimentel, the program coordinator, is excited to begin his journey with students at LPC. The Dream Center provides "a safe and physical space for undocumented students, AB 540 students, DACA students or DACA recipients and also students that are coming from mixed status families," Pimentel said.

Pimentel recalls the difficulties he faced after immigrating. "I remember being discriminated against because I didn't speak any word of English. I remember being bullied in school because of the language barrier," Pimentel said. "It was just a lot getting accustomed to the United States education system."

Pimentel conquered the hurdles thrown at him and graduated high school and college. He attended college at California State University, East Bay. However, throughout the duration of his time at college, there were few resources that he was able to take advantage of due to his undocumented status. "Back then we didn't really have resources available for undocumented students compared to now," Pimentel said.

He went on to earn his M.A. Degree in Education/Counseling and Student Personnel from San Jose State University.

The Dream Center can aid students with DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. DACA is a program that protects around 800,000 young people who entered the United States as undocumented before turning 16 known as Dreamers. While DACA is not a means to earn citizenship, it does allow Dreamers to apply for a driver's license, Social Security number and work permit.

Pimentel is able to work in the United States due to this program.

AB 540, also known as the California Nonresident Tuition Exemption, allows nonresidents and undocumented students who qualify to pay in-state tuition or receive state financial aid.

The Dream Center is a place where students can utilize resources to help them achieve their academic, career and personal goals. Students who come from mixed status families or have undocumented friends are welcome as well. Pimentel wants students from all backgrounds to feel comfortable in the Dream Center.

The Dream Center serves "(n)ot only to provide a physical space, but a sense of belonging, a sense of community, so that (students) can feel seen and valued. Just



Image Courtesy of Natalie Kruger

(Top) Miguel Pimentel in front of his office inside the LPC Dream Center, room 1018. (Bottom) Pimentel has pins on his lanyard representing where he earned his bachelors (CSUEB) and masters (SJSU) degree.

the positive atmosphere that I really want for them as well. Especially because I was an undocumented student myself. I want to provide the resources and knowledge that I have," Pimentel said.

Pimentel hopes that undocumented students today will not have to face the same challenges he did.

"For me, paying for college was really difficult. I remember working almost full-time at a restaurant just to be able to support my college education. Also in college I remember not being able to get into academic programs because they would ask for your Social (security Number)," Pimentel said.

He valued classmates and professors who were supportive of his status and acknowledged his experiences.

"They valued my existence in this country even though I wasn't born here. They valued the fact that I was with them and in college," Pimentel said.

This is why being the Dream Center coordinator is meaningful to him.

"One of the things I really want to promote is that oftentimes undocumented students feel like they're alone in the journey of getting a college education and I just want to let them know that we are here for them," Pimentel said.

Pimentel's experience as a mental health counselor at La Familia Counseling Services helps him support undocumented students at the Dream Center. At La Familia, he provided short-term mental health services to young immigrants and children from mixed families at a high

school in East Oakland.

Understanding what it feels like to be alone in his education journey, Pimentel never wants students at LPC to feel isolated the way that he did.

"I will not let undocumented students be alone here. They belong here as well," Pimentel said.

Pimentel urges the Las Positas community to be open to the immigrant community.

"Don't be afraid to speak up. I am here for you, share your journey and I can share my journey. This space is open to everyone regardless of where you were born. You don't have to be undocumented to use the space," Pimentel said.

New game teaches physics and math

Spaceflight simulator game Kerbal Space Program 2 serves as an educational tool

By Landon Jansen

@LANDONJANSEEN

It's what you want from a space game. Rockets. Explosions. Tiny green aliens.

And a physics engine that simulates space travel so well NASA uses it.

Coming Feb. 24 is Kerbal Space Program 2, or KSP, an adventurous space game where players can freely experiment with physics. The series has scientific foundations, despite its more science fiction elements, and has been used in college physics classes as a learning tool.

The original KSP simulated physics mirroring real-life orbital maneuvers, and it has been used by the likes of NASA engineers to test the limits of aerospace travel. This sequel may expand the capacities of its educational merit. While Las Positas has not used the game as a tool for education in any of its classes, professors and students acknowledge its potential.

KSP 2 is being developed by Intercept's subdivision Star Theory Games. They have teased fans with the promise of colonies, interstellar travel, multiplayer, animated tutorials, revamped flight instructions, improved UI and revamped flight assembly. The team also included that the interstellar travel will allow players to explore natural extremes in external solar systems.

"I'm glad to see there's more games coming out with some educational value," Dr. Jennifer Siders, LPC professor of physics, said.

The first game features a realistic physics engine simulating gravity, air resistance and many of the other important aspects of air and space flight. The game becomes an exposure point to physics. Dylan McGrory, one of Siders' students, is a long time fan of the series.

"It's definitely plausible that it could be used as an education tool. I mean, the physics behind it. They have a pretty good physics engine in there," McGrory said.

The game and physics were designed utilizing Unity engine. Based in Mexico City, Squad, the first developer, made the physics engine as close to reality as possible.

Professor Scott Vaughen, at Montgomery County Community College, uses the game to teach algebra, calculus, physics and more. Utilizing the data values recorded in-game, students can do work for labs and assignments.

"I created an entire course inspired by Kerbal Space Program to introduce math and physics principles in stem fields," Vaughen said.

NASA Pennsylvania Space Grant Consortium sponsored the course. Vaughen can be found on Youtube to review similar material.

Sebastian Vreeburg, a Las Positas student without stem experience, tested KSP with much success despite inexperience.

"The game is quite goofy, but it seems like it was made by really smart people -who are enthusiastic about space and physics," Vreeburg said.



Landon Jansen/Express

Student Sebastian Vreeburg plays Kerbal Space Program, Feb. 7, 2023, Livermore, CA. Vreeburg successfully makes it into space before landing with a parachute, without prior experience.

Those smart people working for Squad made a space simulator unlike anything on the market despite being a small indie developer. KSP has set high expectations for the sequel. While Star Theory Games is developing KSP 2, they are lifelong fans of the original and their principal engineer has a background in the aerospace industry.

KSP has the ability to draw in players of any experience to stem concepts. Vreeburg was able to complete a solo launch and landing.

"It was a lot to read but it was simple and easy to follow," Vreeburg said.

The tutorial is rather short but informative and teaches the game's basic engineering and physics.

Although the tutorial is very easy, the game still features a high learning curve and unforgiving nature.

"Solid 8 in difficulty. Death, try again. Death, try again," McGrory said.

Those failures, common in the campaign, usher in the next successes and growth in the process. Similarly, each failure will make each success feel more important.

"Of course an experienced physicist could calculate all the trajectories and angular velocities, and he could probably predict a certain path and area, and he could probably do a pretty good job. In Kerbal, you don't need an experienced physicist brain, you could just go ahead and play it right now. It's not that expensive anyways," Marcos Ishaug, a physics student, said.

Although this is possible, it's not something the average player must do. Ishaug,

like McGrory, did not use KSP for school work.

"Probably because I am not in such a high level of physics where you are doing rocket velocities and air resistance," Ishaug said.

As a graduate student or higher, the visual aids could be very interesting for a lab or an assignment. On the other hand, the basics of physics wouldn't require the additional extremities of KSP such as air resistance.

The game also features a cheat menu to enable the possibility of simple simulations. Las Positas already uses simulators for physics courses, according to McGrory.

Lower physics courses typically utilize PhET simulations or Vector Addition, that feature basic simulations. They are useful for the visual learning process, but do not compare to the complexities and potential of KSP.

Students take a more supportive stance toward using KSP in classes.

"I think that's just because of the age gap between students and professors. It will be interesting to see what happens in the next 30 to 50 years," McGrory said.

"I know there are discord servers of people who play that game and they compare notes and they learn from each other," Siders said.

KSP was originally designed to function on home computers and be widely accessible. Thus, the developers took a few liberties with the game physics.

"It feels like the game isn't 100% done because of the speed issues. When you did speed dilation, if you did anything above five, your ship would just blow up instantly.

(It was a) physics issue, probably," Ishaug said.

Speed dilation refers to the built in time acceleration feature designed to more quickly pass the long distances of space, from the player's perspective.

Not only did players experience a few issues running the game, primarily on lower-end PCs, but experienced physicists noticed absences of N-body gravitational simulation and time dilation. The sequel may improve these issues with its new development team.

Overall, apart from a few wacky gags and mechanics, such as an overpowered inflatable heat shield, the game is accurate to modern physics.

"I think they are going in the right direction. They are messing with the right stuff, but I don't know if the new developer will be able to do it, we'll see," Ishaug said.

Kerbal Space Program's wave of influence can still be felt today, 12 years later. The tutorials would have to mirror the accessibility of the first game to indoctrinate new players.

Furthermore, a simplified stem-oriented mission, specific to learning physics, might be capable of competing with today's basic simulators in the classroom.

Kerbal Space Program 2 will be available on Steam, Epic and other platforms Feb. 24. Las Positas students would be pleased to play the game with a free access code.

"Free access code? Count me in!" McGrory said.

Monique rises above the competition



Gabriel Carver/Express
Monique Cavness fights for the rebound during the game against Ohlone at Las Positas on Jan. 25. She finished the game with 7 points, 1 assist and 19 rebounds, making a large defensive effort with 4 steals and two blocks.

By Gabriel Carver
@CUP1DCO

In her first season as a Hawk, Monique Cavness became the leading rebounder in the California Community Colleges Athletics Association for women’s basketball.

Cavness has been fighting tooth and nail all season to average 16.8 rebounds per game, using her height and strength to outperform other teams. Coming off an isolating year of lockdown, Cavness unlocked her potential with the Las Positas basketball program, guided by first year ex-pro coach, Caleb Theodore. Her current performance and title have been very impactful for her and everyone on the women’s basketball team.

Becoming a state leader has helped Cavness unlock another gear in her game. Everytime she walks onto the court, no matter who she is playing, she knows she is one of the best. Even players who’ve played more games haven’t been able to match her.

“Other people have played about twenty to twenty-three games, where we only have played seventeen, making my presence well-known,” Cavness said.

Cavness isn’t letting this title affect her ego, though. She continues to focus on other parts of the game, like leadership. Cavness uses the title to inspire her teammates, showing them that even with this title she remains focused on their team goals; she acts as if she does not even have the title.

“She’s a leader through and through. Off the court, she’s an outstanding human being, a woman of high character and is very focused,” Coach Caleb Theodore said.

Cavness makes it her duty to check in on her teammates and help them with their struggles.

“We all are attentive when she speaks,” Freshman guard Mi’Ari Garnett said. “I want her to keep doing what she’s doing because it definitely inspires us as a team.”

Cavness’ accomplishments inspire her team to keep performing and play at the highest level possible. She states that her accomplishments do not separate her from her teammates but instead uses them as proof what hard work gets you.

Growing up, basketball players usually look up to the same notorious pros. Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, Shaq, the list goes on. But Cavness looked up to players that had grit, who weren’t always the flashiest but had a significant drive to do

what they needed to win the play. She stated that these grit players would be one of the key reasons that she focuses on her defensive games, WNBA legend Candance Parker was a key player for her growing up, seeing such a dominant player in that league grew her passion to play.

“I always loved watching Candance Parker, she’s one of my favorites,” she said.

If you dropped fifty points in a game and still lost, the fifty points would be overlooked and things like defense or rebounds will be looked into.

“I’ve always liked Dennis Rodman, he never really would score but his presence was rebounding and making crucial plays,” Cavness said.

Her coach notices that she will do whatever she needs to do to win, so if that means she has to grab over fifteen rebounds for her team then you know she will do it. Cavness has a strong love for defense, which is hard to find in a lot of players who mostly want to score. Her drive to make a crucial impact makes her a better defensive player.



Gabriel Carver/Express
Monique Cavness fights for the rebound during the game against Ohlone at Las Positas on Jan. 25. Cavness is currently number one in the state for rebounding, averaging 17.1 rebounds a game.

“I’ve always been a defensive player, either from my steals or blocks,” she said.

Defense wins championships, and that is Cavness’ goal.

“I would love to put a banner (of that) up,” she said.

Cavness continues to focus on her goal: to leave an impact on the Las Positas program, to turn the trajectory of defeats to victories as a cohesive unit. She does not want to focus on the little things, she looks towards the big picture.

Cavness knows she has a high ceiling, but what she really keys in on is success and what that is. To her, it is the small things, showering her team with support so they can grow into state title-holders like her. As Cavness has an other year on the team, women’s basketball in 2024 is looking optimistic.



HAWK SQUAWK

Basketball

WOMEN’S TEAM
Currently the overall record is 3-23 and conference record is 0-9

Top scorers (points per game):
Ranyae Manu 16.8 ppg
Monique Cavness 14.1 ppg
Semaj Steen 8.3 ppg

MEN’S TEAM
Currently, their overall record is 17-10 and in conference 7-6

Top scores (points per game):
Jordhan Johnson 18.9 ppg
Isaiah Victor 16.5 ppg
Jalen Patterson 15.7 ppg

Swimming

2023 Northern CA Community College Relays

The women came in 4th out of 6 colleges and the men came in 4th out of 5 colleges.

WOMEN
Total points from all events:
66

The women took first in the 150 Yard Breaststroke Relay with a time of 1:47.42, scoring 14 points in the event.

MEN
Total points from all events:
72

The men took first in the 300 Yard Breaststroke Relay with a time of 2:59.98, scoring 14 points in the event.

Hawks fight results in suspension and rule

Why spectators aren't allowed at men's games

By Lizzy Rager

@RAGERLIZZY

Spectators are no longer allowed at men's basketball games and two players on the team are suspended indefinitely per the decision of the Coast Conference Commissioner. This decision, made Jan. 24, is the result of an off-court fight a few days earlier.

In addition, spectators must be escorted immediately after the completion of women's basketball home games. Events planned for the men's games, like a Veterans event, and cheer squad performances, have been canceled.

On Jan. 20 at the Las Positas gym, a physical altercation involving Las Positas and Foothill College players occurred. It escalated to involve spectators, with several bystanders getting hurt. Oversight by campus security may have led to the Hawks losing two key players for the rest of the season and spectators no longer being able to attend home games.

The altercation took place after the game ended around 9 pm. According to Alan Lewis, an Express writer and photographer in attendance, a Las Positas player came out of the locker room with intention to engage with a Foothill player. Assistant coach Anthony Haskett held him back, while the Dean of Athletics, Kevin Kramer, told spectators to leave the gym.

Shortly after, a spectator speaking to the dean pushed him in the chest. From there, more spectators were physically and



Gabriel Carver/Express

The men's basketball team tries to calm down sophomore guard Jaden Phillips (right, sitting) who was angry at a referee, Dec. 8 in a match against West Valley college at the Tony Costello Gym. During the game, Phillips was upset with the referee's calls.

verbally involved.

The one security guard at the gym called for support from the only other security guard on campus and the Livermore Police Department. Nine officers were dispatched to the gym, but no arrests were made.

Another person in attendance said the dean and coach were struck. Sean Prather, the head of campus security, confirmed that an unknown female from Foothill was punched in the eye.

He says that during the game, Foothill fans called for their players to take "retribution," telling them to tag or grab certain Las Positas players. The Foothill team also engaged in a fight at Santa Rosa City college in the past.

Sources stipulate the player who engaged the fight was LPC sophomore guard Jaden Philipps. LPC freshman guard CJ Ward may have also been physically

involved. Neither have been present at the men's games since, putting the roster two players down midseason.

There has yet to be a decision on if the suspended players will be able to compete in the regional playoffs.

Prather said that the officer on-duty at the Jan. 20 game did not notice the spectators heckling.

"In retrospect, we could've identified the people who caused the problem and had them settle down," Prather said.

He says going forward there will be more staff in the gymnasium. Furthermore, Prather and an officer will patrol the gym at all women's basketball home games.

At the time of the incident, President Dyrrell Foster was out of office. Acting Vice President, Dr. Jeanne Wilson, and the athletics dean, Kevin Kramer, spoke with the Coast Conference Commissioner of the

California Community College Athletics Association, Dale Murray, who established the sanctions.

President Dyrrell Foster gave a statement on behalf of the college,

"As a member of the California Community College Athletic Association and the Coast Conference, our college will fully abide by the sanctions, rules and regulations imposed by the Commission."

He did not give a comment on his feelings toward the decision, but said the college would have conversations about security strategies that would be necessary to prevent future incidents.

Men's basketball coach, James Giacomazzi, refused to give comment on the situation.

Foothill's sophomore forward, Daniel Combs, has also not been on Foothill's roster since the incident. Foothill College imposed the same no-spectator rule at their home games.

Combs took his frustrations to Twitter on Jan. 29. "So now we're a team full of delinquents," he posted.

The Hawks have not spoken on the incident, but confirmed that losing those players has forced the team to step up and fill those gaps.

They've had mixed results since, garnering four losses and three wins as of Feb. 16. However, they are still eligible to compete in the regional playoffs with a 7-6 conference score.

The regional playoffs begin Feb. 22 at a location to be determined.

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Where is school spirit at LPC?

By Alan Lewis

@ORMOND1912

Where is school spirit at LPC?

It was a tight game between LPC men's basketball and West Valley College—stress accumulating and sweat dripping as players scrambled to tip the score in their favor. As the clock queued the end of the final quarter and the game went into overtime, concentration swelled for West Valley and they swept the acclaimed Hawks with a 94-89 win. Unfortunately, less than 50 fans were watching.

What's worse is that this is normal. Lack of student engagement stretches across campus. Clubs. Arts. Student Government. Out of 6,826 students, according to a fall 2023 census, only six currently hold government positions. In a transfer-focused school, where extracurriculars solidify four-year transfer chances, this lack of participation is awry. Furthermore, few students attend athletic events, considered a hallmark of the college experience for four years. At Las Positas, audiences typically consist of friends and family of the players.

Las Positas sports are nothing to scoff at, either. In 2022, both men's and women's soccer teams advanced to the second round of Northern California playoffs and men's water polo advanced to the Northern California playoffs for the first time in its history. Not to mention, men's basketball had its best season the same year, going 27-4.

Basketball has the most fans in attendance at home games of all the Las Positas sports but rarely attracts more than 50 fans. Many clubs struggle to attract even the minimum number of students to have a club. When I was the club president, I spent a lot of time recruiting students by posting flyers and doing outreach at photography classes, as other clubs did. The Inter-Club Council, or ICC, Club Fair last semester was almost canceled due to a lack of sign-ups, according to the former ICC Director, Michel Ebeli.

It's not like there's a shortage of clubs. Currently, the active club listing states there are 22 clubs ranging from those associated with a major such as Physics Club, to hobby clubs, such as Film Makers, to recreational clubs, such as the Cheer squad. Most students can find a club that would interest them.

Many students at LPC enter directly from local high schools with lots of school spirit and activities to supplement it. So what's with the sudden change of status quo? One reason is that Las Positas is a commuter school, which fosters an environment where students do not regularly see each other.



Alan Lewis/Express

LPC's Spirit Squad cheers at a men's basketball game versus San Mateo College on Jan. 11 in the Tony Costello gym. They regularly cheer on the sidelines during the games and perform during halftime.

Jean Paulson, a horticulture major and member of the Horticulture club, says, "A lot of people are strapped for time. Especially with after-school activities, it's hard if you're studying." Paulson has been going to Las Positas on and off for 10 years so she could work.

Most students still desire some sense of community and support, though.

"I would've loved to see it at games—having more participation from students. I noticed that the women's teams are struggling to find audiences, same with water polo," said Ailed Barron, a first-year nursing major involved in athletics.

Victoria Vitton, a second-year nursing major, doesn't think there's a lot of school spirit.

"There should be. There's so many cool people here with so many different backgrounds and ages. It'd be cool to have more events and opportunities to intermingle and get to know people better."

Some desire more effort from faculty and administration.

"I feel like we should promote all the games of our sports teams and make a school-wide announcement to everyone, so we know that there's games," said Kathryn Vander Ende, a first-year education major and captain of the Las Positas cheer team. She says the cheer team promotes on social media but doesn't reach many people.

Kevin Kramer, Dean of Public Safety, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation, Health & Kinesiology (PATH) stated that two reasons for the small attendance at athletic events is because less students are on campus

due to the emergence of online-only classes and that some sports teams are relatively young. Both women's volleyball and women's basketball re-emerged in 2022 with new coaches after a two-year break. These teams have also been struggling to put together victories, which impacts attendance, as people generally don't attend games with losing teams.

Las Positas could learn from other community colleges to attract more student participation. Diablo Valley gives athletic passes to clubs, Veterans, and other students. Christine Worley, Dean and Athletic Director at Diablo Valley College, says they attract fans to sports events by encouraging all student-athletes to support each other.

At LPC, some teams support each other by attending their games. Caleb Theodore, the women's basketball coach, takes his team to men's basketball games and other sports when they are in season. Last fall, the men's and women's soccer teams attended each other's games when possible.

When I joined a club and attended events at LPC, I began to feel like I was part of the Las Positas College Community. I have met other students, many of whom I consider friends now, and formed bonds with school administrators and faculty.

I implore you — take a shot at a school event or group. Join a club. A learning program. Stick around for the club fair. Community college is a relatively short experience, so make the most of the time you have here. When you think back on Las Positas, think of the memories you made beyond cramming for exams.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

What do you think about school spirit at Las Positas?



“I definitely would've loved to see it at games. I noticed that the women's teams are struggling to find audiences, same with water polo. I would really encourage students to come out.”

— Ailed Barron,
Nursing



“I definitely think there should be more school spirit. I feel like they (faculty) should promote all of the games for our sports teams and make a schoolwide announcement to everything so that people know.”

— Kathryn Vander Ende,
Education



“I think a sense of community is great and being able to trust people and have a group you can always go to, but I don't think necessarily repping school clothes or talking about Las Positas is what needs to happen.”

— Kale Yunker,
Theater Arts



“A lot of people are strapped for time. If a lot of kids were able to live on college like a lot of four years, I think they would be more able to, but there's commuters and this is kind of a problem.”

— Jean Paulsen,
Horticulture



“I think there should be more of it. There should be more activities, more people actually contributing towards LPC as a school and representing our college...I thought it was weird at first, but I would like to (show spirit) in the future.”

— Sara Tandon,
Theater Arts