The Online Education Initiative (OEI) launches the California Community Colleges Online Counseling Network (CCC-OCN).

The focus of the CCC-OCN is simple, to provide quality and equitable online counseling services to California community college students.

The CCC-OCN is designed to accomplish the following: establish a structured Network of community college online counselors, provide standards and available professional development trainings for online counselors, and utilize an educational technology platform designed specifically for online counseling. In collaboration with @One and the assistance of Statewide counseling faculty Work Group; the OEI is designing an online counselor-training course, which adheres to the National Board of Certified Counselors standards and practices of promoting quality assurance and professionalism in distance counseling services. The professional development training will be available to all colleges late spring.

With regards to the technology platform; working in collaboration with the Foundation for California Community Colleges; the OEI recently selected Salt Lake City, Utah, Cranium Café’s SaaS technology as the best-suited meeting and collaboration platform for providing distance counseling support to online students.

The appeal of the Cranium Cafe platform is that it is designed specially with online student services in mind, and replicates on-campus style counseling services. Students have direct access to counseling support in very much the same way they would on-campus. Without downloading any software, and with the click of one button, online students can instantly connect face-to-face with counselors in a FERPA and ADA compliant collaborative environment. It features a virtual lobby for walk-in sessions, as well as opportunities for virtual counseling appointments and interactive workshops. Because it is allows for Single Sign On authentication, the platform can be utilized for all areas of counseling offered at the colleges, including Mental Health counseling.

Cranium Café and the OEI is currently working with the OEI pilot colleges to integrate the platform within their web pages and learning management systems, as well as to training counselors on the use of the platform.

Under the terms of the negotiated contract, Non-OEI pilot colleges have a “buy-in” option available allowing them to purchase Cranium Café subscriptions at the same discounted pricing as the OEI pilot schools.

For more information about the CCC-OCN, and purchasing subscriptions for Cranium Café, non-OEI pilot colleges interested in taking advantage of this opportunity should contact the OEI Chief Student Services Officer, Bonnie Peters.

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