



College Response to Phantom Student Enrollment

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Dean of Enrollment Services



CLC VALUES

- Excellence
- Purpose
- Integrity
- Compassion
- Unity
- Inclusion





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The Goal: We must ensure a delicate balance of technology, diligence, and human judgment to ensure that **real** students receive the access, education, and support they deserve at the College of Lake County.

Defining Enrollment Fraud

Submission of falsified or manipulated personal information

Use of counterfeit academic records or test scores

Fake identities or impersonation during application process

Misrepresentation or fabrication of information to obtain financial aid funds



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Motivations Behind Enrollment Fraud

Financial-Aid Fraud

- “Phantom” students attempt to claim federal aid

Access to Student Discounts

- Services like Adobe Creative Cloud, Microsoft 365, and other student perks

Online Learning Loopholes

- Fraudsters use online systems to apply without in-person verification/shift in online learning

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Additional Considerations

- Open access mission of Community Colleges are the focus
- Rise in bot-driven enrollments across Illinois, California, Oregon, and Alabama
- Lack of application fees (although, not a proven fraud prev. strategy)
- Increased Synthetic fraud: A mix of real and fake details used to build entirely new fake personas.
- Need for constant adjustment in our practices in response to “bad guy” adaptations

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Methods Used

Use of AI & Deepfake Technology

- Generating realistic fake identities and documents

Mass Application Submissions

- Overwhelming institutions (and CLC) with large numbers of fraudulent enrollments

Constantly adapting to beat fraud prevention tactics

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What have we seen at CLC?



- Fake SAT and ACT test scores
- Fake high school transcripts – and REAL high school transcripts, but also graduating HS at age 20 as a common theme
- Email address coding, ex: jacobcushing4SSN@gmail.com
- Fake identification documents (ID's, passports, etc.)
- Real stolen identities, real addresses and real documents from trusted sources (IE: Parchment)
- Having virtual advising sessions with CCNs and ASAs
- Taking placement tests (DSP and ALEKS)
- Persistent and rude...playing off customer service expectations with WOSC/Reg Services
- Refusal to come in person, increasingly interested in FA, refunds and online only options
- Increase in applications from certain geographic areas (IP addresses)

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CLC Response: AMSA/SAFE Fraud Detection Tool

AMSA/SAFE Overview: AI-driven system to detect and prevent fraudulent applications

Capabilities: Cross-references applicant data and detects inconsistencies

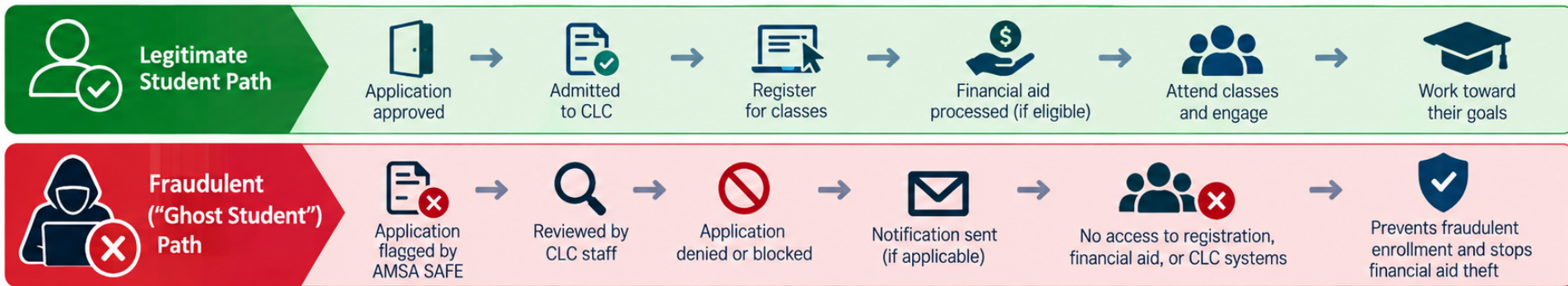
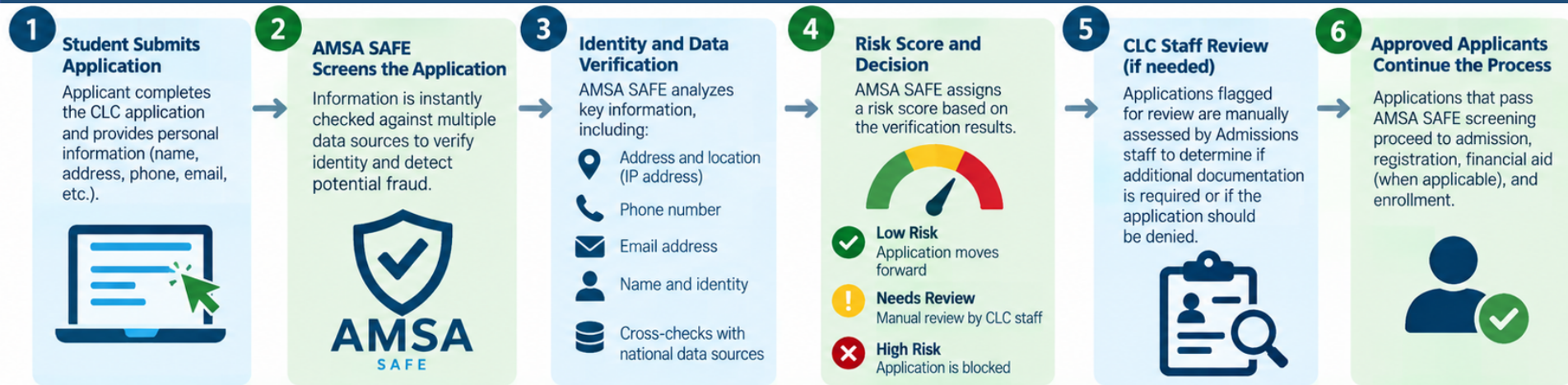


Why We Implemented It – January 2025: Enhancing admissions integrity and protecting resources, take out guessing and human error

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How We Detect and Prevent Fraudulent Applications



AMSA/SAFE “Buckets”

Pass

- No intervention needed and account created

Review

- Registration Services reviews application, corrects common mistakes and checks again on SAFE status
- If record doesn't pass, we move to fail status

Fail

- No intervention



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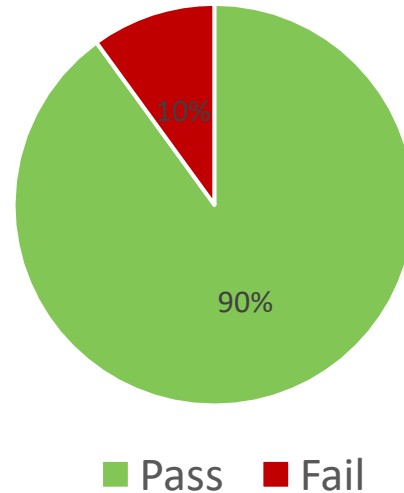


How many applications are suspected fraud?

On avg. CLC receives well over 17,000 applications per FY.

Around 10% of applications have gone into “Failed” status in SAFE since implementation (Jan 2025).

Application Status



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Additional Enrollment Fraud Prevention Tactics

- On-going training of student facing staff
- Adhering to FERPA Guidelines and identity verifications
- Out of wallet information/questions for WOSC, CCNs, ASAs
 - What high school did you attend? You took a class previously at CLC, what was it?
- When in doubt – don't give it out
- Financial Aid and Student Records controls and add'l expectations
- Faculty awareness and things to look for in online courses
- Asking to come in person, etc. (recent CCN experiences)
- Tracking unusual course enrollments



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Outcomes and Future Directions

- **Positive Trends:** Reduction in fraudulent application processing time
- **Enhanced Efficiency:** Faster application processing for genuine students
- **Current Initiatives:** Ongoing staff training, regular system updates and review of categories
- **Fraudulent Student Course Withdrawals:** Able to drop students confirmed to be fraudulent
- **The “Bad Guys” are getting smarter:** We need an institutional wide response to keep up with new strategies, etc.

Human in and human out mentality - staff have a role to play



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Questions / Discussion



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