SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

GPS

GATEWAY TO PERSISTENCE AND SUCCESS

Counseling Department
GPS Best Practices

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SMC GPS Guide – Best Practices

What is SMC GPS?

SMC GPS (Gateway to Persistence and Success) is an online communication and retention tool that supports student success by building a community and facilitating connections between students, faculty, and campus services. Using this tool, students can stay connected with their instructors, get feedback on their progress in class, and access services to help them succeed. This enhanced early alert tool is perhaps the essential technology of the moment, when SMC must fully commit itself to practices and a culture of belonging that enhance persistence and success for our racially marginalized students.

SMC GPS items that can help facilitate communication include flags, referrals, to-do items, and kudos (i.e., FRTK's):

- **Flags** – typically are between instructors and students and do not require counselor intervention. However, a student can self-raise a flag (e.g., "I Need to Meet with a Counselor" flag), which does require counselor intervention.
- **Referrals** – raised by a faculty member for a student. These require intervention from a third party, typically a counselor or a tutor. When addressing a counseling referral, make sure to read the comments attached to the note and address the comments when you contact the student.
- **To-Do** –raised by counselors and used as a reminder for students to follow up with a different department/program.
- **Kudos** – between an instructor and a student. This enables instructors to give positive feedback to students.

Please note that there are many different ways to complete the same task within GPS (e.g., writing a comment, clearing a referral, etc.). Though SMC has tried to identify the easiest, most efficient ways to use GPS, actual use can vary based on a user's personal preference.

We have created this guide to help you get started, but if you find a different method that works for you, that's fine, too – as long as students' needs are being addressed and flags and referrals are being cleared in a timely manner (i.e., within 1.5 weeks during fall and spring; within 1 week or less during summer and winter).

Getting Started:

Go to **smc.edu/gps** and log in using the same username and password you log into your computer with (e.g., Username: NANNINI_DANIEL Password: Youwillbemissed!).

Once you log in, you will be taken to the default landing page. Please update your institutional profile (**Pro tip:** DO NOT include your personal information in your Institutional Profile). Then

change your default landing page by following the instructions below. This will enable you to more readily see your student list/FRTK's without having to manually change your view at each log in:

1) On the top, left-hand side of the screen, click the three parallel lines (i.e., Dan Nannini's **"hamburger"**) to bring down the drop-down menu.
2) You will see a downward arrow next to your name. Click this arrow.
3) Click **"Institutional Profile".**
4) Go to **"Login Page"**, click the down arrow, and select **"Students -> Tracking"**. This will take you to your active FRTK's (i.e., flags, referrals, to-do's, and kudos) in future logins.
5) Under **"Title"**, it is very important to list all programs you work in for that semester or term.
6) Update **"General Overview"** with possible office hours or how to contact your department to make an appointment.
7) Update **"My Biography"** with a little bit about yourself and why you are at SMC.
8) Click **"Submit"** when you are done.

If you do NOT set your **"Login Page"** on your Institutional Profile to **"Students -> Tracking",** you will not immediately see your active FRTK's. To see your active FRTK's, go to the **"hamburger"** to pull down the drop-down menu, select the downward arrow next to **"Students"**, and then select **"Flags/Referrals/To-Dos/Kudos"**.

- Another way to do this is to go to the **"hamburger"** and click **"Students"**. Then click the **"Flags/Referrals/To-Dos/Kudos"** tab on the top right of the screen (the active tab will appear orange).

For additional assistance with updating your Institutional Profile, please see the following video:

https://cccconfer.zoom.us/rec/share/4dVHCeDzzD5JU8_d5XvGZZJ5GqPneaa82nBP_aEOxUsbb28hVRhjxepg23wLc7qz?startTime=1587941673000

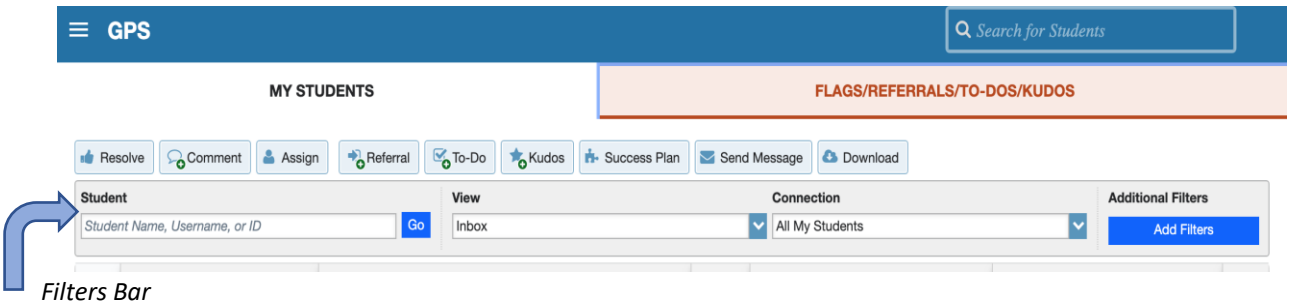
Managing E-mail Notifications:

1) Go to the **"Institutional Profile"** page (follow steps 1-3 in the previous section).
2) Click the **"Email Notifications"** tab (***Note:*** Feel free to ignore the "Appointments" box; we are not scheduling appointments via GPS at this time).
3) Scroll down to **"Summary E-mails"** and leave both boxes unchecked (i.e., "Daily" and "Weekly"). This will help reduce the volume of e-mails you receive from GPS.
4) Under **"Tracking Item Notifications"**, please check **"an item is assigned to me".**
5) Click **"Submit"** when you are done.

Pro tip: Don't rely on email notifications. Just get into the habit of logging into GPS at the beginning of your shift to see if you have any flags or referrals assigned to you. This will get you more comfortable with the software as we roll out other features in the future.

Utilizing Filters:

Now that you have changed your landing page, you should be taken to your active FRTK page when you next log in. You can use a variety of filters to help narrow down your FRTK page. The picture below shows your "Filters Bar":



Filters Bar

Student:

You can search for students by looking them up in the **"Student"** search bar, either by name or by SMC student ID number. To search by student ID, please place an **"s"** before the number (e.g., for a student ID number of "11111", type "s11111").

View:

The drop-down menu under **"View"** allows you to limit the number of students who appear in your FRTK student list. Selecting **"Assigned to Me"** will show you only those students who have been assigned to you, **"Unassigned"** will show you students who have not been assigned to anyone, etc. Conversely, you may create a custom view by using *Additional Filters* (see **"Additional Filters"** section for details).

Connection:

The drop-down menu under **"Connection"** allows you to filter only students assigned to your area. If you are using other filters, such as **"View"** or **"Additional Filters",** you can leave this one alone. However, if you choose to use **"Connection"**, here are some tips:

1) The first two items in the drop-down menu (**"All My Students"** and **"SMC Counselors"**) are for all counselors and list all students.
2) If you have a specialty program, the third item lists that area. If you work in multiple programs/areas, you will see additional items listed for each area. Selecting one of these areas will filter your results to students corresponding to the selected area ***only***.
    - If you notice programs missing, please change your institutional profile and make sure all programs are listed. Then e-mail SMC GPS at GPS@smc.edu and let us know which program is missing from your connections.

Additional Filters:

1) Select the blue **"Add Filters"** button to add additional filters (this will appear as **"Edit Filters"** once you have some filters in place). **Keep in mind that any filters you add will remain in place in future log-ins.**
2) Once you see the Additional Filters pop-up screen, go to **"Cohorts & Relationships"** (2nd tab on the left).
3) Make sure **"Organizations"** is selected. Then select your counseling area(s), which will be moved to the empty **"Selected Organizations"** box on the right. This is particularly useful for counselors who are counseling in more than one area.
4) Select **"Submit"** to save changes.

You can add *even more* additional filters to help narrow down your student list, which is helpful during busier periods, or when you need to prioritize certain referrals:

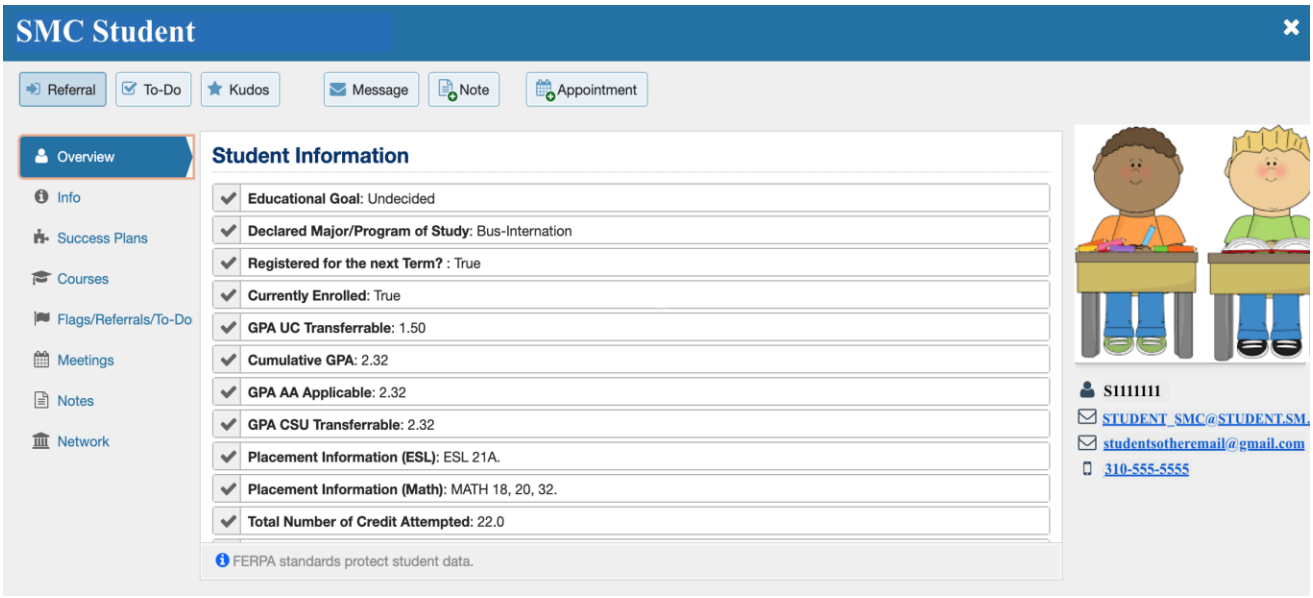
1) On the Additional Filters pop-up screen, go to **"Tracking Items"** (1st tab on the left).
2) For **"Status",** select **"Active".** This will narrow FRTK's to those that are currently open.
3) **"Tracking Type"** can also narrow down your student list by allowing you to filter out certain item types (e.g., To-Do's and Kudos are not items that need counselor intervention. Flags and Referrals, however, require counselors to follow up. Thus, you can limit your Tracking Type to "Flag" and "Referral").
4) For **"Item Name",** select only the items you need to follow up on in your student list. For instance, many instructors use logging into GPS as a homework assignment. Counselors do not need to see the "I've logged into GPS!!" items because there is no follow-up required.
5) Next to **"Assigned To",** selecting **"Me"** will show you items assigned only to you. If you prefer to see all items regardless of assignment, select "All assigned and unassigned" instead.
6) Once you have additional filters in place, click **"Submit"**. ***Remember that your filters will remain in place in future log-ins.*** If you want to remove filters, select **"Clear All Filters"** from the Additional Filters pop-up screen, or simply click the **"X"** in the blue box next to **"Edit Filters".**

Accessing a Student's E-File:

You can find more comprehensive information about students in each student's electronic file (or e-file). Flags and referrals, specifically, are assigned to counselors and can be found in the student's e-file:

1) Once students are assigned to you, you will see them in your active FRTK's list. To see more information, hover over the orange flag or purple arrow next to the "Item Name". This will open a small pop-up screen for the student.
2) On the student's pop-up screen, click "Details". This will open the student's e-file.

3) The student's e-file has additional information that may be helpful to you in the menu on the left side:



Sample e-file

- *Overview* - This gives you additional information/summary about the student, including (but not limited to) the student's educational goal, major, GPA, and enrollment in special programs.
- *Info* - This provides admissions and demographic information about the student.
- *Courses* - This is essentially similar to the student's transcript. The default setting shows you the courses in which the student is currently enrolled. To see the entire transcript, go to the toolbar toward the top and change the "Term" from the current term to "All".
- *Flags/Referrals/To-Do (FRTK)* - This contains active FRTK's.
- *Notes* - All Go notes from WebISIS are automatically transferred to GPS (updates occur nightly). Thus, the "Notes" section of GPS provides a student's counseling history. It also contains all FRTK's (active and cleared) that have been raised for a student, as well as any messages that have been sent to the student via GPS. Clicking on the "+" sign next to the message will show you a copy of the message and indicate whether the student has read it.

4) Click on FRTK on the left side of the e-file menu. In the center of the e-file, you will see the student's flag/referral listed (as well as any additional active FRTK's), and any comments related to it. On the right side of the student's e-file, you will see their picture (if they have uploaded one), student ID number, e-mail address, and phone number.
5) It is helpful to have the e-file up on your screen when you contact students. This will easily allow you to see the student's contact information, FRTK's and corresponding comments all on one screen.
6) Make sure to document all contact attempts (see "Documentation" section for details).

Contacting Students:

Students who belong to special programs are "tied" to the special programs in which they belong. All special programs have identified a person – typically the AA or Student Services Assistant/Specialist – who will receive the incoming GPS referrals and assign them to a counselor. Students who do not belong to a special program will have their messages routed to General Counseling & Transfer Services.

Counselors must reach out and contact the students assigned to them. It may be helpful to have a script ready for any phone calls and messages. Check in with your program's faculty leader, lead GPS counselor, or administrative staff to find out if they would like for you to use a specific script.

If you are able to talk to the student, make sure to address the flag raiser's comments and/or concerns. Then clear the referral (see "Clearing Flags and Referrals" section). You must try to contact the student ***twice*** (or less, if you successfully reach the student prior to the 2nd attempt) before you can close flag/referral:

1) **First contact** – Call the student at the phone number listed on their e-file. If they do not answer, leave a message asking the student to call your main counseling area (or other designated phone number). If you are unable to leave a message, please send a GPS message instead (see step 2 below).
2) **Second contact** – Call the student again. If they do not answer, leave a message asking the student to call your main counseling area (or other designated phone number). Then follow-up by sending a message via GPS.
    - To send a message, click on **"Message"** toward the top center of the student's e-file.
    - GPS messages should be similar to voice messages, in that they should identify the reason for the contact and provide students with contact information for the counselor's main counseling area (or other designated phone number).

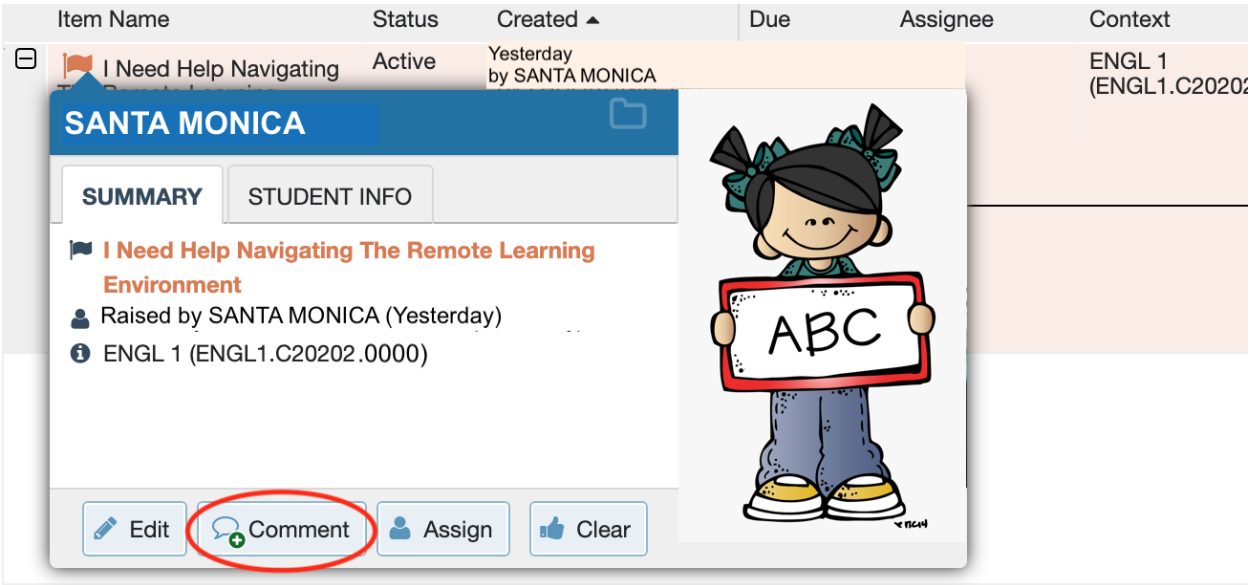
When you successfully make contact with a student, check the student in on Web-ISIS like you would for any other counseling contact. Under **"Visit Reason",** select **"GPS referral"**. Then select **"GPS"** for the service provided. If you are *not* able to make contact with the student, log them into the GO check-in page as a non-counseling contact and document that a contact attempt was made.

Documentation:

When you contact a student, please write a GPS comment under the corresponding flag/referral. There should be a comment for ***each*** contact attempt, including the outcome:

1) After you have contacted a student, from the student's e-file, hover over the orange flag or purple arrow next to the flag or referral name.

2) Click **"Comment"** on the small pop-up screen (see picture below).



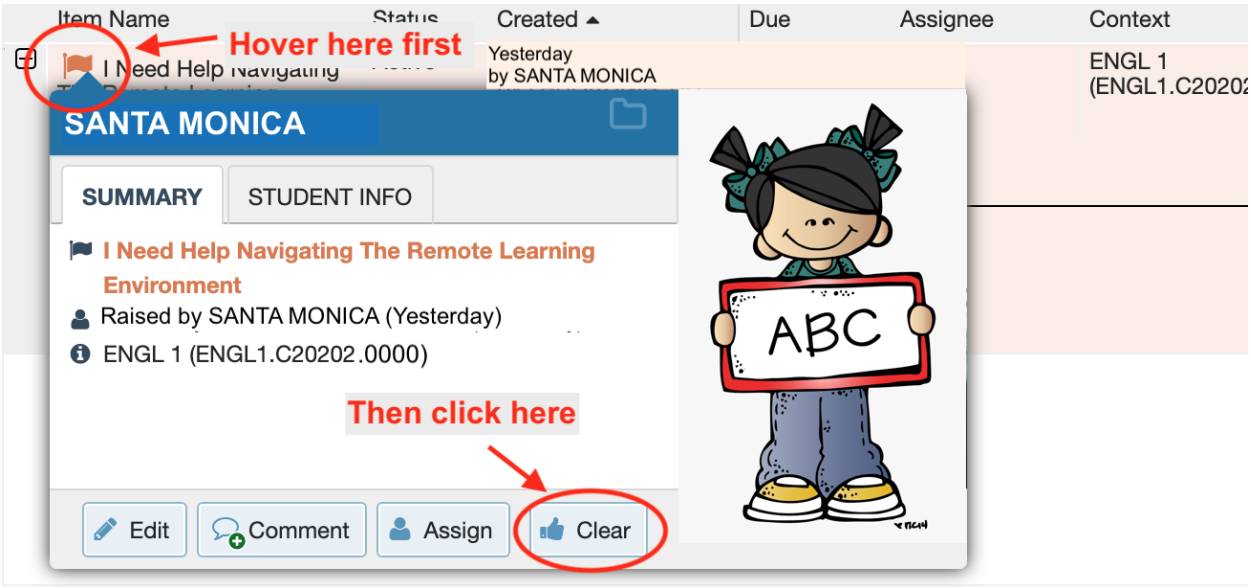
3) After you click "Comment", a **"Create Note"** screen will pop up. In the "Note" field, please briefly describe the nature of the contact (e.g., "Called student; left a voice message requesting a return call," or "2nd attempt – called student; left VM and sent student a message via GPS." **Pro tip:** assume that the student might see the comment. Keep them vague!).
4) If you would like to send a copy of the comment to the student and/or the flag raiser, please check the corresponding boxes.
5) Click submit.

If you have successfully contacted a student, you should have also checked them into WebISIS. Remember to write a Go note once you are done. Since these notes are different than GPS comments and are only accessible by counselors, you can write more details as needed in the Go note. If you were unable to get a hold of a student, write a non-counseling GO note to document your contact attempt.

Clearing Flags and Referrals:

Ideally, flags and referrals should be cleared once you talk to a student and address the concerns raised by the flag raiser. If a student has not responded to your contact attempts, clear the referral after the 3rd contact. ***All flags and referrals assigned to you should be cleared within 1.5 weeks during a regular semester (or 1 week or less during summer and winter):***

1) From the student's e-file, hover over the orange flag or purple arrow next to the flag or referral name (see picture on next page).
2) Click **"Clear"** on the small pop-up screen (see picture).



3) On the **"Clear Referral"** screen, type up a brief comment explaining why you are clearing the referral (e.g., "Spoke to student about instructor's comments; provided appropriate resources," or "Called student twice + sent 1 message via GPS. Student has not responded.").
   - Keep your comments brief. Students and instructors have access to your comments.
4) Below your comment, click "Copy My Comment." This will copy and send your comment to the flag raiser.
5) Click **"Submit"**. This will "Close the Loop" and the student will no longer appear on your active FRTK's list. You do not need to re-document after you have closed the loop.

Additional Notes:

You may have noticed that there is an additional **"Note"** button. These notes are not tied to any particular FRTK's, but they are useful for more general information about the student to be shared with other providers/departments (e.g., "This student is a sole caregiver for family members and cannot have appointments scheduled after 4pm."). Thus, when you are working with a student and addressing FRTK's, you should use **"Comment"** instead of **"Note".** If you do choose to write a note, follow these instructions:

1) Go to your main FRTK page (if you changed your default landing page as suggested, this should be your main login page).
   - If a student does not have an active FRTK, they will not appear on your FRTK list. Instead, from your login page, click on the **"My Students"** tab toward the top left (Remember: your active tab should be highlighted in orange).
     - If you can't find the student, check your **"filters"** and make sure they are not too tight.

2) Use the **"Search"** filter by either typing in the student's name or student ID number. If you are searching by student ID, remember to place an "s" before the number.
3) Check the box next to the student's name.
4) Click the **"Note"** button (located above the filters toolbar).
5) Type a brief note. Check the corresponding box if you'd like to send a copy to the student.
6) Click **"Submit"**.

Please remember that if you speak to a student, you should still be checking them into WebISIS and writing a Go note. You do not need to write a duplicate GPS "note" if you have written a GPS comment and a Go note. GPS "notes" can be used for e-mails and /or any other non-counseling contacts that have occurred, even after a referral has been cleared.

Final Thoughts:

Please keep in mind that the more you familiarize yourself with GPS, the easier it will become to use. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us any time at GPS@smc.edu for additional assistance. Thank you!