

# Financial Aid Department

## Annual Unit Plan for Academic Year 2017-2018

October 2016

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### Describe Department/Unit

#### Mission/Connection to College Mission

The Financial Aid and Scholarship (FA) Office provides resources necessary to decrease financial barriers to higher education. This is accomplished by assisting a diverse population with the process of applying for and receiving aid through federal, state, institutional, and private organizations increasing student access to college. The FA office is devoted to providing quality customer service, efficiency in application processing, and timely delivery of financial aid funds to students. The FA Office aligns with Cerro Coso Community College's (CCCC) commitment to student success by being a vital part of the college's comprehensive student support services. The FA Office supports eligible students by increasing their ability to afford college and complete their educational goals. The FA Office programs are essential for economically disadvantaged students to afford college.

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### Report on Improvements Made and Gaps Identified in the Prior Year

#### Student Equity

**According to trend data collected by KCCD Institutional research and the**

**Population:**

Socioeconomic Status: Economically Disadvantaged

**Analysis and Plan:**

The completion rate for students who receive financial aid is 9.2% compared to completion rate for non-financial aid students at 9.6. This is not a large gap, but with the already low completion rate of the non-financial aid students, it is an area that needs to be addressed. These are students with an overall course completion of a C or better.

Trend data also indicates that financial aid students complete 65% of classes with a C or better while the non financial aid students complete 70% of classes with a C or better.

Retention rate is higher than completion rate for financial aid students with 83% of class enrollment maintained through the semester. Financial Aid students are maintaining enrollment throughout the semester at 83% but have low completion rates . Financial aid students maximize their award amount by maintaining enrollment but have consequences of losing eligibility for financial aid by not meeting academic progress. The increase in our financial aid literacy will provide more information to students on maintaining satisfactory progress for grants and the Board of Governors tuition Waiver.

A subgroup of the economically disadvantaged is foster youth. Foster youth qualify for the maximum state and federal grants along with the Chaffee grant that is specifically for foster youth. Foster youth are also exempt from losing their board of governors waiver due to unsatisfactory progress. We paid 0 Chaffee grants in 1516. This has been a pattern over several years. This population is a high risk group often with limited support at age of 18. Through our increased financial aid outreach efforts, we will work with Admissions & Records, Counseling, Access Programs, and community services to identify, improve access, and provide just in time intervention for our foster youth population.

## **African American**

### **Population:**

Ethnicity: African American

### **Analysis and Plan:**

African American students represent about 5% of our student population which reflects Ridgecrest demographics. African American students success rate at is lower than the general population of students. The college is increasing enrollment in populations that have higher percentages of African Americans such as Tehachapi and California City. Increased financial aid outreach in these areas will provide African Americans information on applying for financial aid and maintaining academic satisfactory progress.

## **Outcomes Assessment: Overall Report**

The Financial Aid Office made several improvements in processes during 1516 to address the low success rate of financial aid students. The Terms of Agreement was updated to clarify satisfactory progress to include the maximum units for certificates. This information was sent to financial aid students and is referred to in their award letter.

Another improvement was upgrading Banner to calculate the maximum 150% units. The past practice was to maximize all students at 60 units for receiving financial aid. This was a compliant issue since certificate's 150% maximum units can be much lower than 60 units. This corrected a non compliant issue but increased our students that were suspended from financial aid due to maximum units. We are seeing more students consider their longer goal of a degree as their program versus the more immediate goal of certificates within that degree.

To help address the low percentage of students applying for and receiving financial aid, FA T.V. was implemented. FA T.V. provides information on all aspects of financial aid and the financial aid process. This information is available to students at any time. Within the FA T.V. is information on maintaining satisfactory progress.

To address our growing Hispanic population, the FA T.V. was updated to include Spanish in Fall 2016. Students now have the ability to select Spanish subtitles the various informational videos. It is often the Hispanic student's parents that need information translated for aspects of financial aid applications.

There remains the need to implement a process that only pays students for classes that are in their program of study as required under Title IV regulations. Although students are informed of this requirement, at this time, BANNER does not have the capability of matching classes to a program, Scribing of programs is up to date to allow the match with Banner. Due to previous modifications in BANNER and data input incorrectly over a span of years, Degree works is not accurate to use for this purpose. The District IT is working on corrective measures to address correcting BANNER processes.

The FA Offices have implemented 3 payments beginning 1516 to help decrease the over payments to students and decrease institutional liability. This will be accessed in December 2016 when all 1516 aid goes through final reconciliation. The concern with giving students less money before the semester is the cost of books. The availability of book vouchers was increased to help address the book cost for students that had a higher cost of books than their before semester disbursement. There were 3 students who requested a book advance due to the decrease in payment before the semester. Only one student actually used the book advance. This was much lower than expected. This does not represent the students who begin the semester without books decreasing their probability of success in classes. Many times these are students who applied late for financial aid or have not follow through with verifications documents in a timely manner. With the earlier FAFSA process and tax year considered a completed tax year, it is the expectation that most students will be able to do an IRS transfer of information decreasing the need for a tax transcript from the I.R.S.

Scholarships awarded decreased in 1516. This decrease was due to two factors. First, several scholarships did not have funds to support an award and therefore the scholarship was pushed to 1617. Second, the eligibility for several large scholarships are limited by programs that are no longer available and/or unrealistic GPAs for our population. The Financial Aid Director is working with the PI Director, the Foundation and Donors to broaden the criteria of such scholarships.

The college implemented a new on-boarding tool, Navigate, in Spring 2016. This on-boarding tool directs students to important information on financial aid. There is discussion on broadening the Navigate platform access to continuing students. This will allow timely annual and semester reminders for students and will increase financial aid information to all students.

The Financial Aid Office continues to explore ways to educate students on financial aid opportunities and requirements including satisfactory progress due to the gap in financial aid students success identified.

## Outcomes Assessment: Gaps Identified in Prior Year's Assessments

**Decrease financial barriers while implementing processes that encourage student behaviors that increase success and completion.**

**Type:**

AUO

**Target Missed/Gap Detected:**

Students receiving financial aid continue to have lower success and completion rates than non financial aid students. The financial aid students has to be in 12 units to maximize awards. At this time, the units can be in any units regardless of the students declared program. This could be the cause of higher retention rate and the underlying cause for the lower success rate.

**Type of Gap:**

Need to improve operational processes.

**Analysis and Plan:**

The Financial Aid Office has decrease barriers and has a 2 week turn around on students ready to package. The ability to match classes to programs and only pay for classes in the students program remains problematic in our BANNER system. This is a non-compliant issue not only for our college but most CA Community Colleges. This would also help students remain on their educational path and increase degree completion.

Possible solutions are being explored to address this non-compliance issue. With the full implementation of Degree Works, there is a possibility of attributing the appropriate classes to the programs in BANNER.

## Progress Made on Program Review

### Financial Aid

**Year of Last Program Review:**

2016

**Progress in the last year on two-year strategies:**

I.) Decrease number of students on FA warning & suspension-Increase success rate for FA students

1. FA T.V. Get SAP will be a "just in time" intervention for students coming in to FA, on warning or suspension.
  - a.) framework set up for implementation in Spring 17
  - b.) requiring students to complete FA T.V. workshop is under review with an implementation date of Fall 18
  - c.) Board of Governors waiver eligibility requirements implemented
  - d.) Students given notice and information on their eligibility spring 16.
  - e.) Appeal form and process completed and included in FA T.V. workshops and online

II.) Increase assistance to the Hispanic student population

a.) Spanish sub-titles added to FA T.V.

III.) Increase the number of students applying for scholarships

a.) Increased financial aid technicians attendance in outreach efforts at all sites

b.) Increased information on scholarship application process in outreach presentation

**Progress in the last year on five-year strategies:**

I.) Programs and Classes matched in BANNER and Degree Works to allow financial aid payment only for classes that apply to the student's program.

a.) Financial Aid Director attended Ellucian Alive/Degree Works annual training attending workshops and network meetings addressing this issue.

b.) Degree Works scribing of programs complete which is essential for this process.

II.) Written Policies and procedure manual for the FA Office

a.) Several district wide financial aid policies/procedures were written in 15/15

b.) A draft manual identifying areas needed in the final manual has been created by the Financial Aid Director.

## **Progress Made on Prior Year Initiatives**

### **Increase knowledge and use of Financial Aid**

Financial Aid T.V. "Get Answers" was implemented Fall 2015. This program provides tutorial videos with text that answer questions concerning all areas of financial aid, the requirements of priority enrollment, and the new requirement for maintaining eligibility for the board of Governor's waiver. Another feature of FA T.V., Get SAP, will be implemented in Spring 2017 providing workshops to students on meeting academic progress.

Financial Aid Technicians increased attendance at outreach events that included more site visits at open house and other times throughout the year including individual appointments to assist students with their financial aid including completing FAFSA applications and verification documents. Two sites were added to outreach calendar, Desert High School and Tehachapi Center.

Measure of Success:

Over time, the gap between financial aid students and non financial aid student obtaining a degree, certificate or transfer will decrease as more students apply for financial aid and student on financial aid are expected to remain on their program path.

## Increased assistance with potential and 1st year students

1.) Materials provided to students have decreased from the State. More information is available within the FA T.V. "Get Answers" videos. Fall 2016, FA T.V. Spanish text was implemented. FA T.V. needs to be embedded throughout the web pages as appropriate to connect students looking for specific information.

2.) EAB was implemented in Spring 2016 but limited to incoming students. A plan is in place to broaden the use to continuing students which will inform the student population of important information and deadlines for financial aid.

3.) Live chat was implemented but proved to be ineffective with students. With the security concerns, questions were very general and most students needed specific information and were directed to call the offices. Most general information that could be given was found on the website by students. This was discontinued.

### Measure of Success:

Students receiving financial aid for 1516 increased by 1% from 1415. While this is not a large increase, it was a change from the previous decrease of 7% in 1415. The action items completed and in progress above will take time to measure success.

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## Plan Initiatives for Next Year

### Initiatives for Next Academic Year

#### Policy and Procedure Manual

##### Action Plan:

The Financial Aid Technicians have completed most policies for their specific task. To be in complete compliance, all policies and procedures should be organized in a Manual to strengthen organization effectiveness.

1.) Fall 2017- Manual Draft complete with Financial Aid Technician assigned to oversee compiling information

2.) Spring 2018- Manual complete

3.) Spring 2018- Implement process of updating manual annually and as needed.

##### Measure of Success:

Policy and Procedure Manual will be complete with all policies updated in manual and on website.

Procedure for annual review of policies college and district wide in place

##### Person Responsible:

FA Director and FA Technician as assigned

##### It directly addresses a college Strategic Goal or Objective

Strategic Goal #5- Organizational Effectiveness

An updated policy and procedure manual for all financial aid staff will improve institutional effectiveness by providing a consistency in processes, cross training, and consistency district wide.

## **Identify classes in students program in BANNER for compliance in payment.**

### **Action Plan:**

- 1.) Implementation of Degree Works by Fall 2017 with correct catalog rights and academic standing
- 2.) Financial Aid Office will have access to students educational plan for students on warning or suspension.

### **Measure of Success:**

Classes will be identified in students programs for payments. Classes not in students programs will not be considered in total units for payment.

Students enrollment will be more intentional remaining on program path, increasing student completion of programs.

### **Person Responsible:**

Financial Aid Director

### **It directly addresses a college Strategic Goal or Objective**

Strategic Goal #1- Improve Student Success, 1.) Provide just in time communication with students

Students will have informed decisions when enrolling in classes to complete program.

## **Decrease number of students on FA warning and suspension**

### **Action Plan:**

- 1.) Fully implement FA T.V. Get SAP- Fall 2017
- 2.) Fall 2017- Require completion of Get SAP workshop for students new to financial aid, on warning and on suspension.
- 3.) Fall 2017- Students on warning getting Ed Plans through degree works

### **Measure of Success:**

A decrease in students on warning and suspension from financial aid using 1617 as a base year. This plan could take 2 years to have a measurable difference.

### **Person Responsible:**

FA Director, FA Technician that prepares FA appeals

### **It addresses a program review strategy**

Decrease Number of Students on FA Warning and Suspension increasing student success.

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## **Evaluate Resource Needs**

### **Facilities**

There is no identified need in this area.

## Information Technology

No additional need

## Marketing

Increase in Materials and advertising including Spanish materials.

## Professional Development

The Degree Works training by Ellucian is vital to keep updated on Degree Works and Banner integrations.

Financial Aid Technicians continue attending appropriate state and federal annual conferences going on alternate years.

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## Staffing Requests

### 1000 Category - Certificated Positions

N/A

Location:

Justification:

### 2000 Category - Classified Staff

N/A

Location:

Salary Grade:

Number of Months:

Number of Hours per Week:

Salary Amount:

Justification: