

Financial Aid Department

AUP for Academic Year 2024-2025

October 2023

Describe Department/Unit

Connection to College Mission

The Financial Aid and Scholarship 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 and families to afford college.

Report on Improvements Made and Gaps Identified in the Prior Year

Student Equity

1. In the past year, we implemented a Student Financial Wellness program aimed at providing students with insights into the psychological aspects of their financial behavior. The goal of this workshop is to educate and empower students to make more informed financial decisions. We successfully hosted this workshop with 109 attendees, and the statistics revealed a clear need among our financially vulnerable students:

- 82% of attendees were Pell grant recipients.
- 73% of those students had an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of 0.
- 64% of the participants were first-generation students.
- 53% of the attendees were enrolled in Access Programs.
- 12% of the students had utilized Basic Needs services.

Recognizing the significance of this workshop, we plan to continue offering it on campus while extending its reach to local high schools. By providing students with this knowledge earlier, we aim to better prepare them for their college journey.

2. We identified a language barrier affecting both our students and student workers, particularly one worker whose primary language is Mandarin. To bridge this gap, we will be using Google Translate to convert key training materials into Mandarin, enabling her to comprehend the content more effectively. As a result, she will be able to provide clearer information to our students. Building on this success, we have initiated a workshop in Spanish to cater to our Spanish-speaking student population, with the first session scheduled for later part this month.

3. We have been judiciously allocating our emergency funding to assist students in need. This included providing substantial support to our undocumented student population, resulting in a notable increase in California Dream Act Applications for the 2023-2024 academic year, rising from less than 20 to 50 applications.

4. We expanded our staff and adjusted workload distribution to ensure fair and efficient handling of responsibilities. This restructuring, along with comprehensive cross-training, allows technicians to address student inquiries, even in the absence of their colleagues, thereby enhancing service efficiency and reducing student wait times.

5. Campus Logic has been successfully implemented, greatly expediting the review and processing of financial aid documents. This digital system ensures that documentation remains traceable and eliminates the risk of documents being misplaced.

6. Over the past year, we attended three major conferences, including the KCCD Annual Conference, NASFAA, and CCCSFAAA. These events provided valuable networking opportunities, insights into program-specific practices, and a better understanding of how other community colleges handle various situations. We also benefited from utilizing NASFAA for federal regulation inquiries and training.

7. We have streamlined and updated our Policy and Procedural (P&P) manual, aligning it with our current practices. This clarity ensures that staff members can confidently rely on the manual when making critical decisions regarding Professional Judgments, Appeals, and the review of potentially fraudulent student cases.

8. We now have two dedicated student workers consistently available to provide general information and support to students via phone, email, and text messages. Their assistance includes addressing balance inquiries, scholarship and grant availability, document completion, and updates on financial aid events.

9. We have updated Consumer Information, including disclosures of institutional information, financial assistance details, campus and fire safety information, completion and transfer-out rates, and athletics data, which will soon be reflected on our website.

10. Our federal work-study opportunities have been increased, providing students with more valuable employment options.

11. We are actively promoting awareness of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements. By engaging in more SAP discussions, we hope to emphasize the importance of both completing courses successfully and properly managing course withdrawals to students.

These initiatives collectively represent our commitment to enhancing student success and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities.

1. CADAA Application Completion: While we have made strides in increasing the number of CADAA applications, it is imperative that we maintain a timely and consistent approach to processing these applications. Our commitment to serving undocumented students requires ongoing outreach efforts to ensure their needs are met.

2. Financial aid student success rates: Our primary objective is to witness a substantial improvement in the success rates of our financial aid recipients. We aim to empower these students to excel in their coursework and achieve their educational goals by providing clearer appeal options and more workshops on the importance of SAP.

3. Regarding scholarship completion rates, given our student population, there's room for growth in the number of applications we receive. Presently, for the 23/24 aid year, we've processed 166 applications, whereas in the 22/23 aid year, we handled 145 applications. Looking further back, in the 21/22 aid year, we managed 117 completed scholarship applications. Although we are making steady progress, I aim to reach a broader segment of our student body. At the moment, we are only engaging with 3% of our student population, which stands at 5,195 individuals. To expand our reach, we will continue offering workshops and sending out mass notifications to encourage more students to complete scholarship applications.

4. We need to improve FAFSA completion rates. While we saw an increase in applications during the 21/22 aid year, these numbers declined significantly in the 22/23 aid year. To address this, we will persist in our efforts to promote mass FAFSA completion campaigns. Furthermore, with the recent implementation of FAFSA simplification, we anticipate a rise in FAFSA completion applications for the 24/25 aid year.

FinAid - Applicant Count by Aid Year and College

Aid Year	FinAid College	Application Code	Application Description	Distinct Students
2021	C	EDE	EDE Record	2940
2122	C	EDE	EDE Record	5299
2223	C	EDE	EDE Record	3653
2324	C	EDE	EDE Record	3074

Outcomes Assessment: Loop-Back Improvements Made

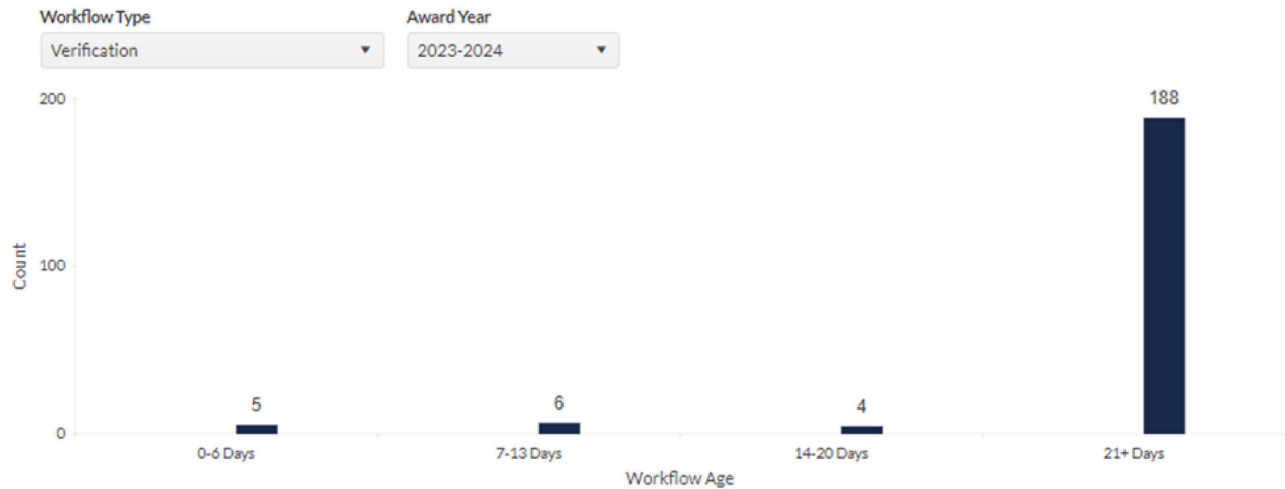
Actions taken in the prior academic year

Over the past year, our department has achieved significant progress in enhancing our services and operations. These achievements encompass several key areas:

In the past year, we significantly expanded our outreach efforts to better support our students. This included offering valuable assistance in various crucial areas. Promoting financial wellness, we conducted two workshops over the course of the year. The first workshop was held prior to our second Pell disbursement, and the second took place after it. This strategic timing facilitated a seamless transition to a two-disbursement system for the aid year, as opposed to the previous three-disbursement structure. We hosted FAFSA/CADAA workshops, both in person and through Zoom, to assist students in completing their financial aid applications. We also extended our reach to high schools, providing opportunities for students to receive guidance remotely via Zoom sessions. In addition, we introduced scholarship completion workshops, offering both virtual and in-person options. These workshops were designed to guide students through the scholarship application process, ensuring they could access these valuable opportunities for financial support.

The adoption of Campus Logic and our shift towards a digital environment has had a profound impact on the efficiency of our application processing, surpassing the challenges posed by our previous reliance on paper applications. This transition has led to a significantly streamlined workflow. Below, you will find a timeline detailing our verification review process. The initial 21+ days encompassed a combination of training and the period during which files were loaded into our system, leading up to the commencement of the actual review process. It is evident that we are progressively finding our rhythm, as indicated by our recent trend of completing reviews within 14 days.

Workflow Aging



We have diligently updated our Consumer Information materials, and they are now ready for launch on our website. This comprehensive update will significantly improve accessibility to essential information related to financial aid, campus facilities, student athletes, gainful employment programs, campus security, prevention of drug and alcohol abuse on campus, and fire safety. These enhancements are designed to benefit current and prospective students, parents, faculty, and staff, ensuring that this vital information is just a couple of clicks away, promoting ease of access for all.

The recent achievement of full staffing within our department has provided us with the capacity to focus on the refinement and enhancement of our various programs and services, thereby elevating our overall effectiveness.

Each technician has been assigned specific program responsibilities, including but not limited to the Direct Loan Program, Return to Title IV (R2T4), Cal Grant administration, Access/Basic Needs awarding, Campus Logic management, Dream Act Uploads, Batch Packaging, Record Loading, and Federal Work-Study coordination. By allocating these programs, each technician can develop expertise in their assigned area and readily assist their colleagues with program-specific information. Moreover, all staff members have acquired a foundational understanding of other programs to ensure they can provide assistance when a technician is unavailable. Considering the ever-evolving landscape of financial aid, we recognize the need for regular training and updates to maintain alignment and ensure that we stay current with industry changes. Consequently, we intend to institute bi-semester training sessions to foster knowledge sharing and promote consistency within our office. This proactive approach will enable us to adapt to the ongoing updates and developments that are intrinsic to the field of financial aid.

We have successfully utilized essential funding sources that were at risk of being lost, including HEERF funding, the OSHER Scholarship, Finish Line Scholars Grant, Disaster Relief Emergency Financial Aid, Barnes & Noble Scholarship, Pepsi Scholarship, Federal Work-Study, and Federal SEOG. This ensures the equitable distribution of resources to those in need.

Through a collaborative initiative with Admissions and Records, we have taken proactive steps to combat fraud by creating a robust process for validating student information. The directors convened to develop a procedure that ensures we do not inadvertently review the same students multiple times. This proactive approach has notably enhanced our ability to detect and address fraudulent cases before they result in disbursements, rather than discovering them when it's already too late.

Lastly, we have undertaken initiatives to simplify the process of awarding Cal Grants, rendering it more efficient and accessible for eligible students. In the past, we manually inputted each Cal Grant recipient, but we have now implemented an automated process that seamlessly populates the Cal Grants for our students. Subsequently, our technicians focus on reviewing their respective alpha sections to include the Completion Grant and reconcile the files. This streamlining has significantly expedited the awarding process.

Our department has made significant progress in the past year to enhance our services and support for students. We expanded outreach through financial wellness, FAFSA/CADAA assistance, and scholarship workshops, aiming to improve students' access to vital resources. The adoption of Campus Logic greatly streamlined our application processing and verification reviews, improving efficiency. We also updated Consumer Information materials, providing easy access to essential information for all stakeholders. With a fully staffed team, we've focused on program refinement and cross-training for optimal assistance. We've utilized critical funding sources effectively and proactively addressed fraud risks in collaboration with Admissions and Records.

Lastly, we've automated the Cal Grant awarding process, benefiting eligible students. These efforts underscore our commitment to enhancing support, efficiency, and staying current in the evolving financial aid landscape.

Outcomes Assessment: Results of Last Year's Assessments

Evaluate the success rates of students who have submitted appeals by comparing data from the current and the last two fall semesters.

Fall 2021/2022: 202170

Fall 2022/2023: 202270

Fall 2023/2024: 202370

MAXPRG: Maximum Program

SUSP: Suspended

SUSP90: Suspended and Maximum Program

In the fall semester of 2021/2022, there were 201 financial aid students who fell under the categories of MAXPRG, SUSP, or SUSP90. Out of these 201 students, 33 submitted an appeal, which represents 16% of the unsuccessful population.

In the fall semester of 2022/2023, there were 230 financial aid students classified as MAXPRG, SUSP, or SUSP90. Out of this group, 61 students submitted appeals, making it 27% of the unsuccessful population.

As for the fall semester of 2023/2024, there were 258 financial aid students who met the criteria for MAXPRG, SUSP, or SUSP90. Among these students, 56 have submitted appeals, with more appeals still pending. In total, there are expected to be 70 appeals for the fall semester. This equates to 27% of the unsuccessful population being on appeal by the end of the fall semester.

These statistics indicate an increase in the number of appeals, but a concurrent rise in unsatisfactory academic progress. This trend may be attributed to various factors, such as students returning from previous years of suspension, students not taking full advantage of the appeal process, or a combination of ongoing appeals and new appeal applications. For the fall semester of 2023, there have been 35 new appeal applications, with some of them being re-appeals from the previous aid year.

Target Met?

Yes

During the spring semester of 2022/2023, we distributed a student satisfaction survey, which garnered responses from 111 participants. Among those who took part, 85.6% revealed that either they or a family member had been in contact with the financial aid office during the 2022-2023 academic year. A smaller percentage, 14.4%, stated that they or a family member had not reached out to the financial aid office.

We were able to ascertain the primary reason for contact, which was related to checking on financial aid status and/or requesting forms, accounting for 54.7% of responses.

The predominant method of communication utilized to reach our office was by phone, selected by 68.4% of respondents. In-person visits were the next most common mode of contact, reported by 38.5% of students. Additionally, students frequently contacted the office via phone 2-3 times (34.4%), visited the virtual lobby 2-3 times (53.3%), and reached out through email 5 or more times (30.6%).

The majority of students (74.2%) reported no difficulties in contacting our office, whether through phone, the virtual lobby, or in person. The remaining 25.8% who encountered difficulties cited reasons such as internet issues, unavailability at the financial aid counter, extended hold times, difficulties connecting with staff members due to recorded messages, and being directed to the wrong person. Additional issues included changes in the staff that responds, lack of email or in-person responses, prolonged hold times or dismissive phone interactions, staff passing inquiries to others, and lengthy voicemail waits (10 minutes or more).

When it comes to wait times, the data revealed that 33.3% experienced wait times of less than 5 minutes, while 29.9% waited for 5-15 minutes, 24.1% received immediate assistance, and 12.6% had to wait for 15 minutes or more.

In terms of staff interaction, the majority (72.3%) reported that our staff was very courteous or polite, with 16% indicating a neutral stance, 5.3% reporting both courteous and somewhat courteous and polite interactions, and 1.1% expressing dissatisfaction with the courtesy and politeness of the staff.

Regarding the knowledge of representatives, 51.6% found them to be very knowledgeable, 22.6% reported knowledgeable, 15.1% indicated a neutral perception, 6.5% stated somewhat knowledgeable, and 4.3% found them not knowledgeable at all.

In terms of the overall student experience with financial aid services, 56.4% reported an excellent experience, 25.5% considered it good, 8.5% found it average, 4.3% deemed it not good, and 5.3% rated it as poor.

Target Met?

Yes

Outcome of workshops, hosting more workshops, seeing an increase in attendance of said workshops.

We have been proactive in ensuring our staff is present at all locations, promoting not only the FAFSA but also the California Dream Act Applications (CADAA). We have included CADAA information on all our promotional materials, including flyers. In addition, we have organized workshops for both applications within the community, in classrooms, at campus events, and have reached out to serve all local high schools.

Over the past year, our staff has been actively engaged in facilitating FAFSA and CADAA completion at all campuses. We have expanded our efforts by incorporating more CADAA-related content, including the creation of Spanish-language flyers. While we have not yet initiated in-

class or community-based workshops, we have successfully hosted on-campus events such as SAP Awareness, Financial Aid Awareness Month celebrations, and workshops focused on FAFSA, CADAA, and scholarships.

Target Met?

Yes

Outcomes Assessment: Missed Targets

Outcomes Assessment: Schedule of This Year's Assessments

Success rates of students who are appealing.

To evaluate the success rates of students who are going through the appeal process, we will utilize COGNOS reports to track the percentage of students who initiated the appeal process in the fall 2023 semester (202370) and monitor their progress as we transition into the next semester (202430).

Student Satisfaction Survey

We will continue the practice of distributing our Student Satisfaction Survey to our student body each spring semester. This ongoing effort will enable us to assess our current standing in terms of customer service and identify areas that require improvement.

FAFSA/CADAA Application Completion

We will persist in our efforts to oversee FAFSA/CADAA applications and motivate students to finalize them. We'll increase our outreach by sending additional notifications to those who have not yet completed their applications. We will also distribute Shopping Sheet notifications, outlining the potential financial aid they could access upon application submission. We'll emphasize that submitting an application broadens their opportunities. Furthermore, we'll maintain detailed records of application completion rates for each semester.

Program Review

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Year of Last Program Review:

2023

Actions Taken in the Prior Year to Address Strategies:

Percentage of successful completion:

Percentage of successful completion:

Utilizing Financial Aid	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Yes	56%	56.9%	51.9%	56.6%	48.7%
No	32.3%	21.0%	24.5%	30.2%	31.3%

Comparing the success rates of students who received financial aid versus those who did not, it is evident that financial aid has made a positive impact on student outcomes. In the years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, over half of the student population who received financial aid were successful in their classes, while the success rates for students who did not receive financial aid were significantly lower.

In addition, the enrollment data shows that the percentage of students receiving financial aid has fluctuated over the years but has remained around 50%. However, in the 2021-2022 academic year, the percentage of students receiving financial aid increased to 80%, which suggests that more students are in need of financial assistance due to economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Financial Aid Office at Cerro Coso Community College plays a crucial role in determining the support needs of service recipients. The department relies on various sources of input, including advisor group feedback, institutional and departmental discussions, and special research, to gain a comprehensive understanding of student needs. On average, the department grants financial assistance to 54% of all students at the college, providing federal and state grants, scholarships, and the California College Promise Grant (CCPG) to economically disadvantaged students who may also receive the Pell Grant and Cal Grants.

The college also partners with outside entities, such as local high schools, to provide comprehensive support services for current and potential students. It is worth noting that the target population for Cerro Coso Community College is spread across a large area of 18,500 square miles, in addition to the distant online population. Therefore, the Financial Aid Office and other support services play a critical role in ensuring that all students have access to the resources they need to succeed in their academic pursuits.

Two-Year Goals/Strategies

4.2.1 Two-Year Goals/Strategies

Action Plan for 2-Year Strategy 1

Concise Description of Strategy	Find out which students require assistance in filling out the FAFSA/CADAA and provide them with support to complete the process.
Measurement of Completion	Examine the enrolled students and collaborate with various departments, such as IR, Outreach, and Admissions and Records, to identify individuals who have indicated financial need on their admissions application. Evaluate non-U.S. Citizens to determine if they are eligible for the CADAA. Enhance efforts to reach out to all the regions we cater to and motivate them to finish their applications.
Timeline	2025-2026 Academic Year
Responsible Person	Financial Aid
Current Process	Utilizing Basic Needs lists, Navigate lists, and Counseling lists

Action Plan for 2-Year Strategy 2

Concise Description of Strategy	Have a fully trained staff that is completely verse in financial aid
Measurement of Completion	Annual evaluations, frequent trainings, and staff meetings to ensure we are all on the same page.
Timeline	2025-2026 Academic Year
Responsible Person	Financial Aid
Current Process	Completed one training with the staff and have completed two one on one trainings so far.

Action Plan for 2-Year Strategy 3

Concise Description of Strategy	Speed up processing of applications (FAFSA, CADAA, Appeals, Professional Judgements)
Measurement of Completion	You can use Campus Logic (CL) to keep track of application receipts and request documents for appeals and professional judgments. Additionally, CL can measure the duration it takes to process a file from the time documents are received. We can leverage CL to send email notifications to students, urging them to log in and access the required documents. Our team will monitor the system daily for new files that require review. After completing the review, any necessary corrections will be communicated within a week, and then the aid for the file can be processed. CL can also keep tabs on the time it takes to complete a file from receipt of the documents until the end.
Timeline	2024-2025 Academic Year
Responsible Person	Financial Aid
Current Process	Campus Logic has already sped up our process. Initially we were at 4-6 weeks of verification, Appeals, and Professional Judgements. We are now at 2-4 weeks.

Five-Year Goals/Strategies

Action Plan for 5-Year Strategy 1

Concise Description of Strategy	Increase Scholarship applications
Measurement of Completion	Confirm the submission of scholarship applications through Academic Works. Ensure that our Program Coordinator is organizing workshops. Visit classrooms and ask professors to dedicate a day for application submissions.
Timeline	2026-2027 Academic Year
Responsible Person	Financial Aid
Current Process	Already reaching out to instructors, sending out mass Navigate messages to students via text and email letting them know scholarships are available. For the 23/24 aid year, we increased applications to 166 applications. The goal is to increase throughout the next couple of months.



Strategies Still to be Addressed:

Action Plan for 5-Year Strategy 2

Concise Description of Strategy	Decrease the number of students on warning and suspension from financial aid.
Measurement of Completion	Observe a reduction in suspension and max program occurrences. Utilize Tableau to assess the completion rates of students who use financial aid and those who do not. Experience a decline in the frequency of financial aid appeals, while ensuring success for those who still need to appeal.
Timeline	2026-2027 Academic Year
Responsible Person	Financial Aid

Action Plan for 5-Year Strategy 3

Concise Description of Strategy	Hiring of a Scholarship and Professional Judgement Manager and a Department Assistant III
Measurement of Completion	Demonstrate the necessity of having a dedicated individual focused on scholarships and Professional Judgements, as well as financial aid budgets and aiding our students. Emphasize the importance of expanding outreach efforts to surrounding areas like Bishop, Mammoth, Tehachapi, KRV, and

	Edwards Base to increase opportunities for students.
Timeline	2026-2027 Academic Year
Responsible Person	Financial Aid

Last Year's Initiatives

Transcript articulation

Campus Logic:

The implementation was a resounding success. We now consistently use Campus Logic for the tracking, verification, and monitoring of student accounts. An important improvement is that we no longer receive files until they are fully completed; they remain in the student queue until the student finishes their tasks. We've also implemented a weekly notification system to keep students informed until they complete their tasks or reach the maximum outreach limit. This system allows us to more effectively track fraud by having Campus Logic flag our V4 and V5 students. It has also proven effective in monitoring students with actionable flags that require additional documentation. Additionally, we are exploring the further resources that Campus Logic provides, such as the Award Letter feature.

NASFAA Value Plus Membership/Webinar Package and Compliance Engine P&P Builder:

Our staff continues to make the most of our NASFAA Value Plus Membership for assistance with federal regulation inquiries. We rely on NASFAA for updates on upcoming conferences and access to training that we can obtain through our membership fee, instead of individual fees for financial aid-specific programs. Currently, my staff is scheduled to participate in a range of training programs, including R2T4 training, verification training for the 2024-2025 aid year, Professional Judgment training, Consumer Information training, and Student Aid Index training. These courses are thoughtfully structured to last up to 6 weeks to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Our staff successfully employed the P&P Builder to revise our Policy and Procedural Manual. This program has been instrumental in helping us identify and address items requiring updates.

Reminder of Initiatives for the Current Year

Reminder of Initiatives for the Current Year

Campus Logic

NASFAA Value Plus Membership

Plan Initiatives for Next Year

Initiatives for Next Academic Year

FAFSA completion

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

1. Conduct comprehensive training sessions for staff to familiarize them with the upcoming FAFSA simplification changes for the 2024-2025 academic year.
2. Following staff training, initiate workshops in February with the primary objective of assisting local high school students in

completing their FAFSA applications.

3. Develop a range of workshop options, including both virtual and in-person sessions, catering not only to the IWV campus but also extending services to Tehachapi, Kernville, Bishop, Mammoth, and Edwards Base.

4. Utilize mass email and text notifications through Navigate to reach out to individuals who have not yet completed their financial aid applications.

Early Observational Data, or "Lead" Measure(s):

1. The number of staff members who have completed comprehensive training sessions on FAFSA simplification changes for the 2024-2025 academic year. This measure indicates the readiness of staff to assist students with updated FAFSA requirements.

2. The number of local high school students who attend the workshops initiated in February for assistance with FAFSA applications. This measure reflects the initial outreach and the level of engagement among the target audience.

3. The number of workshop options developed, both virtual and in-person, and the geographic scope of these workshops, encompassing Tehachapi, Kernville, Bishop, Mammoth, and Edwards Base. This measure gauges the expansion of services and accessibility for students in different locations.

4. The number of email and text notifications sent to individuals who have not completed their financial aid applications through Navigate. This measure assesses the outreach efforts to encourage application completion and serves as an early indicator of responsiveness among the student population.

Does the department request help developing these instruments?

No

Institutional Performance Data, or "Lag" Measure(s):

Continue to monitor the numbers of applications received monthly. It will help identify those who have not completed so we can send monthly notifications. We can utilize Navigate, COGNOS, Tableau, and individual reports.

Person Responsible:

Financial Aid Director

Unit gap or institutional goals addressed:

It addresses a 2- or 5- year program review strategy

California Dream Act Application (CADAA) increase and more outreach to Undocumented students

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

The CADAA will follow the FAFSA updates and become available in December.

1. Conduct comprehensive training sessions for staff to familiarize them with the upcoming CADAA simplification changes for the 2024-2025 academic year.

2. Following staff training, initiate workshops in February with the primary objective of assisting local high school students in completing their CADAA.

3. Develop a range of workshop options, including both virtual and in-person sessions, catering not only to the IWV campus but also extending services to Tehachapi, Kernville, Bishop, Mammoth, and Edwards Base.
4. Utilize mass email and text notifications through Navigate to reach out to individuals who have not yet completed their financial aid applications.

Early Observational Data, or "Lead" Measure(s):

1. The number of staff members who have completed comprehensive training sessions on FAFSA simplification changes for the 2024-2025 academic year. This measure indicates the readiness of staff to assist students with updated FAFSA requirements.
2. The number of local high school students who attend the workshops initiated in February for assistance with FAFSA applications. This measure reflects the initial outreach and the level of engagement among the target audience.
3. The number of workshop options developed, both virtual and in-person, and the geographic scope of these workshops, encompassing Tehachapi, Kernville, Bishop, Mammoth, and Edwards Base. This measure gauges the expansion of services and accessibility for students in different locations.
4. The number of email and text notifications sent to individuals who have not completed their financial aid applications through Navigate. This measure assesses the outreach efforts to encourage application completion and serves as an early indicator of responsiveness among the student population.

Does the department request help developing these instruments?

No

Institutional Performance Data, or "Lag" Measure(s):

Continue to monitor the numbers of applications received monthly. It will help identify those who have not completed so we can send monthly notifications. We can utilize Navigate, COGNOS, Tableau, and individual reports.

Person Responsible:

Unit gap or institutional goals addressed:

It addresses a 2- or 5- year program review strategy

Outreach

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

1. Ongoing Enhancement of Outreach Materials
 - Updating materials for FAFSA simplification changes
 - Revising content for CADAA simplification updates
 - Promoting FAFSA/CADAA completion to access funding sources like CCPG, Cal Grant, Pell Grant, CSEOG, and potential eligibility for Access funding
 - Fostering scholarship application completion

- Enhancing resources for student financial wellness

2. Expanding Outreach Efforts to High Schools and Sister Campuses

- Continue liaising with our neighboring high schools and sister campuses to coordinate onsite visits by our staff

- Offer virtual options to accommodate those unable to attend in person

3. Consistent Notification Dissemination

- Maintain a regular schedule for sending notifications about both in-person and virtual workshops

4. Collaborating with Other Programs for In-Person Meetings

- Establish connections with programs that require face-to-face interactions, particularly the Access Programs, to make use of our workshops, with a special focus on scholarship application assistance and student financial wellness resources.

Early Observational Data, or "Lead" Measure(s):

Monitoring these initiatives involves several steps:

Ongoing Enhancement of Outreach Materials:

1. Updating Materials: Regularly review outreach materials for FAFSA and CADAA, especially when there are changes in regulations or requirements. This should be done annually or as needed.

2. Promoting Completion: Monitor the completion rates of FAFSA and CADAA applications and track the number of students applying for funding sources like CCPG, Cal Grant, Pell Grant, CSEOG, and Access funding.

3. Scholarship Application Completion: Track the number of scholarship applications submitted and awarded.

4. Student Financial Wellness: Gauge the usage and effectiveness of resources related to student financial wellness. Collect feedback from students who have utilized these resources.

Expanding Outreach Efforts to High Schools and Sister Campuses:

1. Onsite Visits: Maintain a calendar of planned visits to high schools and sister campuses. Track the number of visits made and the level of engagement with these institutions.

2. Virtual Options: Monitor the participation in virtual sessions and gather feedback from those who attend virtually.

Consistent Notification Dissemination:

1. Notification Schedule: Maintain records of notification schedules, ensuring that notifications are sent out as planned. Monitor the open rates and responses to notifications.

Collaborating with Other Programs for In-Person Meetings:

1. Establishing Connections: Document the programs and organizations with which you have established partnerships. Monitor the number of collaborative events or meetings with these organizations.

2. Special Focus Areas: For specific areas of focus, like scholarship application assistance and student financial wellness, track the number of students who have utilized these services and their feedback.

For all these initiatives, data collection, regular reporting, and feedback from students and participating institutions are crucial to assess their effectiveness and make necessary improvements. This can include surveys, attendance records, application completion rates, and any other relevant metrics. Adjustments should be made based on the feedback and data to continuously improve these efforts.

Does the department request help developing these instruments?

Yes

Institutional Performance Data, or "Lag" Measure(s):

Keep track of attendance, FAFSA/CADAA completion, and scholarship completion utilizing COGNOS, Tableau, and individual workshop rosters.

Person Responsible:

Director of Financial Aid

Unit gap or institutional goals addressed:

It addresses a 2- or 5- year program review strategy

Campus Logic

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

We are in a 2-year contract for the award letter that is scheduled to go live for the spring 2024 semester (2023-2024 aid year).

1. Work with District IT and Ellucian on implementation of the new Award Letter
2. Assign technician to consistently monitor the processing of the award letters
3. Gain sufficient training on the award letter process through Campus Logic
4. Begin running the Award Letters for the Spring24 semester

Early Observational Data, or "Lead" Measure(s):

Implementing a new Award Letter system can benefit our organization in several ways:

1. Efficient Implementation: Working with District IT and Ellucian ensures a smooth implementation process. This collaboration helps in integrating the new system seamlessly, minimizing disruptions, and enhancing the overall efficiency of your award letter process.
2. Effective Oversight: Assigning a dedicated technician to consistently monitor the processing of award letters ensures that the system runs smoothly and that any issues or delays are addressed promptly. This proactive approach reduces the chances of errors and delays in delivering award letters to students.
3. Enhanced Knowledge: Gaining sufficient training on the award letter process through Campus Logic equips our team with the necessary skills and understanding of the new system. This knowledge empowers our staff to manage the award letter process effectively, from creating templates to handling student inquiries.
4. Timely Distribution: Initiating the award letter process for the Spring 2024 semester allows us to provide financial aid information to students in a timely manner. This ensures that students have clear details about their aid packages, helping them make informed decisions and reducing uncertainty, especially our out of state athletes.

The implementation of a new Award Letter system, alongside dedicated monitoring, adequate training, and timely initiation, contributes to a more efficient and effective financial aid process. This, in turn, can lead to improved student satisfaction, better communication, and increased transparency in the awarding of financial aid.

Does the department request help developing these instruments?

Yes

Institutional Performance Data, or "Lag" Measure(s):

To monitor the benefits of implementing a new Award Letter system, you can use various data sources and metrics:

- Track the progress of the implementation project through project management tools or software. Monitor milestones, timelines, and completion rates.
- Measure the reduction in disruptions or downtimes during the implementation phase. Gather data on system availability and performance before and after the transition.
- Use system logs and monitoring tools to track the processing of award letters in real-time. Measure the time it takes to process and deliver each award letter.
- Keep records of issues and delays, along with resolutions and response times. This data helps in identifying recurring problems and assessing the effectiveness of the dedicated technician's role.
- Conduct regular reviews and audits of the award letter process to ensure that it aligns with established service level agreements (SLAs) and targets.
- Collect data on student response times, such as the time taken by students to acknowledge receipt or seek clarifications about their award letters.
- Survey students about their satisfaction with the timeliness and clarity of the award letter distribution process.

By collecting and analyzing data related to these aspects, you can assess the impact of the new Award Letter system on efficiency, oversight, knowledge, and timely distribution. This data-driven approach allows you to make informed decisions and adjustments to continually improve the financial aid process and enhance the overall student experience.

Person Responsible:

Unit gap or institutional goals addressed:

It addresses a gap in student equity

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Is this part of a multiyear initiative?

Yes

Specific Action Steps to be Taken:

Elaborating on the steps to be completed to continue showcasing the importance of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and to ensure student awareness and compliance:

1. Classroom Outreach:- Identify Target Classes: Collaborate with academic departments to identify key courses or classes where SAP is crucial for financial aid eligibility. These could include introductory sessions, freshman seminars, or courses related to financial literacy.

- Arrange Classroom Presentations: Schedule presentations by financial aid staff or experts to enter these classrooms and deliver engaging sessions on the significance of SAP. These presentations should cover the impact of SAP on financial aid awards, academic progress, and future eligibility.

-Provide Real-life Examples: Share real-life examples and scenarios to illustrate how SAP affects a student's financial aid journey. This can help students understand the practical implications of maintaining SAP.

2. Workshops on Appealing for Financial Aid:- Plan Workshop Sessions: Organize regular workshops dedicated to educating students about the process of appealing for financial aid due to SAP issues. These workshops should provide step-by-step guidance on how to prepare a successful appeal and the necessary documentation.

- Promote Engagement: Encourage active participation and engagement during these workshops. Allow students to ask questions and seek clarification on any concerns related to SAP appeals.

3. SAP Awareness Events:- Create Awareness Campaigns: Organize events and campaigns specifically focused on raising awareness about SAP. These events can include information booths, seminars, or webinars dedicated to explaining the importance of SAP.

- Offer Resources: Provide students with resources, brochures, and handouts that clearly outline the SAP requirements and the steps they should take to maintain satisfactory progress.

- Peer Sharing: Encourage students who have successfully navigated SAP challenges to share their experiences and insights. Peer-led discussions can be relatable and impactful.

By implementing these steps, your institution can effectively showcase the importance of SAP, encourage students to maintain satisfactory academic progress, and equip them with the knowledge and resources they need to succeed. This proactive approach can lead to higher SAP compliance rates and, in turn, enhanced access to financial aid for eligible students.

Early Observational Data, or "Lead" Measure(s):

It's crucial to monitor and assess the impact of the steps taken to showcase the importance of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and ensure student awareness and compliance. This data can help determine the effectiveness of these initiatives and guide any necessary adjustments. Here's how to collect and analyze early observational data:

1. Classroom Outreach:- Data Collection: Begin by tracking the number of classroom presentations conducted, the courses targeted, and the number of students reached during these presentations.

- Feedback: Gather feedback from students who attended these presentations. Use surveys or informal discussions to gauge their understanding of SAP and its significance.

- Academic Progress: Monitor the academic progress of students who attended these presentations, comparing their SAP status with those who did not attend.

2. Workshops on Appealing for Financial Aid and SAP Awareness events:- Attendance: Record the attendance at these workshops and distinguish between students who attended and those who did not.

- Engagement: Measure the level of engagement by noting the number of questions asked, requests for clarification, and overall participation.

- Success Rate: Track the number of successful SAP appeals following these workshops, and compare this to the rate before the workshops were initiated.

3. Overall SAP Compliance:- Regularly review the overall SAP compliance rates before and after implementing these steps. Note any changes in compliance and eligibility for financial aid.

4. Student Feedback:- Gather feedback from students through surveys or focus groups regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving their understanding of SAP and financial aid requirements.

5. Student Success:- Evaluate the academic performance and progress of students who actively engage with the SAP awareness initiatives. Compare this data to students who do not participate.

By collecting this early observational data, we can gauge the impact of these SAP awareness efforts. This data-driven approach allows for informed decision-making and potential adjustments to ensure that students are well-informed about SAP and financial aid compliance. Over time, continued data collection and analysis will provide insights into the long-term effectiveness

of these initiatives.

Does the department request help developing these instruments?

No

Institutional Performance Data, or "Lag" Measure(s):

Keep track of and monitor all above Lead Measure to produce live data. Utilize COGNOS, Tableau, individual workshop reports, and Navigate.

Person Responsible:

Unit gap or institutional goals addressed:

It addresses a 2- or 5- year program review strategy

Evaluate Resource Needs

Facilities

Facility needs encompass several important considerations. First, there is an imminent requirement for office expansion. In due course, this expansion will entail dividing my current office into two separate spaces to accommodate the Admissions and Records Director as well as the Financial Aid Director.

Additionally, I propose a thorough assessment of the feasibility of creating a workspace for an urgently needed additional employee. One option under consideration is the division of responsibilities among technicians or the incorporation of a dedicated space at the front for the Department Assistant II. This new role would assume the position of a program coordinator responsible for overseeing Scholarships and Appeals/Professional Judgements. This appointment holds significant importance in the context of bolstering our scholarship offerings and devising strategies to mitigate unsatisfactory academic progress while concurrently enhancing appeals and professional judgments.

Finally, we should explore the potential of relocating my Department Assistant III (DAIII) to one of the satellite campuses in Bishop, Mammoth, or Tehachapi. This evaluation aims to optimize the allocation of resources and staff to effectively support these satellite locations.

Information Technology

Establishing Campus Logic Award Letter:

The establishment of the Campus Logic Award Letter system is aimed at streamlining the process of creating and distributing financial aid award letters to students. This software enables a more efficient and user-friendly approach to managing financial aid information, ensuring that students receive clear and comprehensive award letters. The implementation of this system will improve the transparency and accessibility of financial aid details, ultimately enhancing the overall student experience.

Adding a Third Monitor for Staff:

The addition of a third monitor for staff members is essential due to the increasing complexity of managing multiple financial aid programs for individual students. With various programs and criteria to consider, staff members need additional screen real estate to efficiently review and process financial aid applications. This enhancement will significantly improve productivity by allowing staff to access and compare information more seamlessly, resulting in quicker and more accurate decisions on financial aid awards.

Procuring a New Laptop:

The request for a new laptop is prompted by the ongoing technical issues experienced with the current device, which frequently causes the screen to black out. To ensure optimal functionality and efficiency in day-to-day tasks, a Lenovo ThinkPad with a 15.6-inch display is the preferred choice. A reliable laptop is crucial me to carry out my responsibilities effectively, particularly when working with various software applications, data management, and communication tools. The new laptop will contribute to improved work performance and prevent interruptions caused by technical glitches, ultimately benefiting the overall operational efficiency of the financial aid office.

Marketing

Creating Multilingual Outreach Materials:

The initiative to create outreach materials in multiple languages serves as a response to the diverse linguistic needs within our student population, with a particular focus on Spanish speakers and other non-English-speaking communities. By diversifying our outreach materials, we aim to break language barriers and ensure that vital information about financial aid and academic progress is accessible to all students. This effort aligns with our commitment to inclusivity and equity, facilitating clear communication and understanding of complex concepts, ultimately improving student engagement and success.

Maintaining Outreach Momentum for Satisfactory Academic Progress:

Upholding the momentum in the distribution of outreach materials designed to educate students on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is pivotal in ensuring continued student success and compliance with academic requirements. These materials play a crucial role in conveying the importance of SAP, the potential consequences of falling short, and the available support resources. Consistent distribution and engagement efforts help students remain informed, make informed academic decisions, and take appropriate actions to meet SAP standards. This ongoing commitment to SAP education is integral to student retention and achieving the institution's academic goals.

Professional Development

Attendance at Conferences:

Active participation in conferences is a cornerstone of our commitment to staying updated with the latest developments and best practices in the field of financial aid. These events offer a valuable platform for networking, knowledge sharing, and exposure to innovative solutions. By attending conferences, our team gains insights into emerging trends, regulations, and technologies, equipping us to make informed decisions that enhance the delivery of financial aid services to our students. It also provides opportunities to share our experiences and contribute to the collective wisdom of our industry.

Attendance at Chancellor's Office Webinars:

Attending webinars hosted by the Chancellor's Office is integral to our engagement with institutional updates and statewide initiatives. These webinars provide a direct channel for staying informed about key policy changes, compliance requirements, and educational priorities in our region. By actively participating in these webinars, we ensure that our institution is well-prepared to align with broader educational objectives, address institutional challenges, and deliver financial aid services that meet the evolving needs of our students and community.

Attendance at NASFAA Webinars and Utilizing NASFAA U for Financial Aid Certifications:

Engagement with the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) through webinars and certification programs is an essential part of our professional development strategy. NASFAA webinars offer a wealth of expertise and insights from industry leaders, enabling us to remain at the forefront of federal financial aid regulations and best practices. Additionally, utilizing NASFAA U for financial aid certifications is instrumental in equipping our staff with the necessary skills and credentials to navigate the complex landscape of financial aid. This continuous learning process empowers our team to provide high-quality support to our students and ensures that our institution remains compliant and responsive to the evolving financial aid landscape.

Other Needs

Financial Aid Awareness Month is a crucial for our institution. It needs to be larger than it has been in the past years. Traditionally centered on the IWV campus, there's a growing need to broaden its reach to encompass all our campuses.

By extending Financial Aid Awareness Month to all our campuses, we achieve several vital objectives. First, it enhances student

engagement by ensuring that a more diverse student body receives relevant information and resources. Each campus may present unique needs and challenges, and a comprehensive awareness month guarantees that all students have access to pertinent support.

This expansion is aligned with our institution's commitment to equity and inclusivity. Recognizing the pivotal role financial aid plays in ensuring equitable access to education, we strive to offer the same opportunities to all students, irrespective of their campus location.

Additionally, acknowledging regional disparities, we can tailor our outreach efforts to address the specific needs of students at each campus. For instance, we can provide information on regional scholarship opportunities or local financial aid resources, catering to the unique circumstances of each location.

Expanding Financial Aid Awareness Month institution-wide fosters a sense of unity and collaboration. It underscores that financial aid is a shared priority, emphasizing that all campuses are integral parts of our broader educational community. This cohesion fosters more consistent messaging and a collective commitment to student success.

This expansion allows us to allocate resources and personnel more effectively. By focusing on the particular needs of each campus, we ensure that the right support and information are available where they are needed most.

Broadening Financial Aid Awareness Month to encompass all our campuses is a proactive measure to meet the diverse needs of our student body, promote inclusivity, and enhance the overall accessibility of financial aid resources. This comprehensive approach reflects our unwavering dedication to student success across all campus locations and aligns seamlessly with our mission to provide equitable educational opportunities for all.

Staffing Requests

1000 Category - Certificated Positions

Banner Financial Aid New Year Roll Out

Location:

No Location Specified

Justification:

In this multi-day, virtual training engagement, an Ellucian Financial Aid Subject Matter Expert will review your current business process, validate against existing configuration in Banner Financial Aid and provide consultative support in readiness for the New Year Roll. Some items included but not limited to are providing advisory support throughout the review of criteria set in the prior year and determination as to whether to re-establish the same criteria for the new aid year; providing consultative support of changes that would be needed to meet new procedures for the new aid year (i.e. FAFSA Simplification Act); and assisting with setup of appropriate pages.

2000 Category - Classified Staff

Program Manager

Location:

Ridgecrest/IWV

Salary Grade:

42.5

Number of Months:

12

Number of Hours per Week:

40

Salary Amount:

\$4,227.69 - \$5,973.61

Justification:

The recruitment of a Program Coordinator specializing in scholarships, Appeals, and Professional Judgements within the Financial Aid Office (FAO) is essential due to the department's current operational challenges. Presently, despite working at full capacity, the FAO faces difficulties in efficiently managing its tasks. The existing staff, including the Director of Financial Aid and a few financial aid technicians, already have significant responsibilities related to their core roles. As a result, their capacity to adequately address scholarship programs, Appeals, and Professional Judgements is limited. This underlines the need for a dedicated Program Coordinator to oversee these critical areas.

The absence of this specialized role would have a profound impact on the college. The management of scholarships, Appeals, and Professional Judgements is pivotal in ensuring equitable access to financial aid and supporting student success. Without a dedicated Program Coordinator, the college would face challenges in processing scholarships effectively, disseminating vital information about Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), and providing support to students navigating the appeals process. This could lead to delays, reduced transparency, and potentially affect student satisfaction. Moreover, the current situation places an added burden on the existing staff, impacting their ability to deliver on their primary responsibilities.

Currently, there isn't a temporary employee performing the specific work assigned to this Program Coordinator position. The work related to scholarships, Appeals, and Professional Judgements is managed jointly by the Director of Financial Aid and financial aid technicians. This division of tasks results in limited efficiency and effectiveness. The Director and technicians juggle these tasks alongside their primary roles, which compromises their ability to dedicate the required attention to these crucial functions.

The addition of a Program Coordinator specializing in scholarships, Appeals, and Professional Judgements is vital to address the challenges faced by the FAO. This position is indispensable for promoting efficient scholarship management, SAP awareness, and a streamlined appeals process, ultimately contributing to student success and equitable access to financial aid. The current strain on existing staff underscores the necessity of this dedicated role.

Department Assistant III

Location:

EKC Tehachapi, ESCC Bishop, ESCC Mammoth Lakes, Kern River Valley, Ridgecrest/IWV

Salary Grade:

38

Number of Months:

12

Number of Hours per Week:

40

Salary Amount:

\$3,385.23 - \$4,783.24

Justification:

The Financial Aid Office (FAO) has recognized the pressing need for expanded outreach to high schools to facilitate FAFSA and

CADAA completion. In response, the consideration of adding a Department Assistant III (DA III) has emerged as an imperative step to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations. The responsibilities assigned to this potential DA III position encompass several essential secretarial and clerical functions, ensuring the smooth coordination and management of vital tasks within the FAO.

The scope of the DA III's role would be extensive, involving duties such as scheduling appointments and processing personal information, managing office supplies and equipment, as well as receiving and processing mail. This role is crucial in maintaining a streamlined and well-organized office environment. The DA III would also be responsible for various document-related tasks, including typing and proofreading a wide range of documents, drafting professional correspondence, and actively participating in the planning and execution of events and functions relevant to the FAO's responsibilities, such as fundraising and college programs.

The DA III would play a central role in overseeing and coordinating the work activities of clerical and student staff, providing leadership in monitoring workflow and evaluating work products, methods, and procedures. This role also extends to student assistance, including class scheduling and arrangements for special accommodations.

The DA III would take charge of various administrative duties, including report preparation, verification of timecards, and the issuance, receipt, and processing of applications, permits, and forms. This role encompasses the organization and maintenance of filing systems, including student records and budget information, contributing to efficient record-keeping and accessibility of important information.

Additionally, would manage the receipt, verification, and recording of incoming shipments, ensuring compliance with established standards and the timely distribution of supplies to appropriate locations. This position is essential for maintaining the integrity of financial records, monitoring expenditures, and participating in budget preparation and administration.

Crucially, the DA III would function as a supervisor for clerical and secretarial staff, providing direction and oversight while serving as a point of contact for information regarding college policies and procedures. This role also encompasses participation in budget preparation and administration, requiring the preparation of cost estimates and justifications for budget items.

Given the complex nature of financial aid budgets, a dedicated position is crucial to ensure proper management. A comparative analysis with Bakersfield College, one of our sister campuses, reveals that their office staffs a DA III, along with multiple DA II positions. This demonstrates a need for additional assistance to manage the multifaceted tasks associated with the FAO.

The addition of a DA III, alongside the role of a Financial Aid Outreach Specialist (FAOS), would equip our office with the necessary resources to operate efficiently. This staff augmentation would allow the existing team to allocate their focus more toward community outreach and mastering the programs essential for their roles, including R2T4, Direct Loans, Cal Grant, Record Load, and the Reconciliation of Federal and State Aid. Furthermore, the FAO would be better positioned to conduct more frequent visits to neighboring areas such as Mammoth, Bishop, Kern River Valley (KRV), Edwards Base, and Tehachapi. With the additional support, the Director of Financial Aid would receive much-needed assistance in creating and updating policies and procedures, generating reports, and overseeing the holistic functioning of the financial aid office.

The addition of a Department Assistant III is instrumental in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the FAO's operations, facilitating crucial outreach to high schools for FAFSA and CADAA completion. The complexities associated with financial aid budgets necessitate a dedicated position, and a comparative analysis with sister campuses underscores this need. This staff addition, in conjunction with a Financial Aid Outreach Specialist, will empower the FAO to operate more efficiently, focus on community outreach, and excel in critical financial aid program management.