

Comprehensive Program Review Report



Program Review - Financial Aid

Program Summary

2022-2023

Prepared by: David Loverin

What are the strengths of your area?: STAFF: The Financial Aid Team consists of 15 staff who serve students at the 3 COS campus locations.

5 Clerical Assistants (3.5 FTE) – who are the front line of the Financial Aid Office. They work the walk-up counters and are the student's primary contact with the Financial Aid Office. Good customer service is important. A Clerical Assistant must be prepared to accurately answer all student questions related to the financial aid process. They must collect documents from students, review them to make sure they have been completed correctly, and scan them into the document system.

5 FA Specialists (5 FTE) who process over 17,000 FAFSA applications each year. They review all student documentation including; tax transcripts, special circumstance forms, dependency override requests, high school diplomas, and loan applications. They must verify that all information is accurate and the student financial aid file is complete according to Federal and State policy. Once that is done they disburse financial aid awards to the students. In addition to reviewing and funding student applications, FA Specialists have additional specialized responsibilities, such as; enrollment reporting, return of Title 4 calculations, reporting to Californian Student Aid Commission, maintenance of FA Webpage, foster youth support, loan entrance counseling, and helping with financial aid workshops.

1 Federal Work Study Specialist (1 FTE) who keeps track of all student employees. Duties include, interviews, placement, tracking student hours, tracking student and department budget, and making sure payroll and HR forms are completed.

1 Student Support Services Specialist (1 FTE) – Financial Aid Outreach / Welcome Center Support. The Student Support Services Specialist (4S) provides financial aid related support to students, staff, community groups, and feeder high schools. Our outreach program continues to grow in scope of service to students. The 4S performs several FAFSA / Dream Act application workshops to parents and students at high school locations within the COS District. The 4S maintains positive working relationships with high school counselors and community partners. The Student Support Services Specialist also supports the Welcome Center. This person helps organize and present at the College's orientation event called Giant Days. The 4S with organizing and planning the STEPS event to help incoming freshmen apply to the College, see an academic counselor, and register for classes. The 4S works the Welcome Center floor helping students with financial aid questions regarding FAFSA, Dream Act, Bank Mobile, Appeals, etc.

1 FA Resource Specialist (1 FTE) who processes academic progress appeals and unusual enrollment history verifications. Students who have been disqualified from receiving financial aid can appeal to have aid reinstated under certain extenuating circumstances such as; serious illness, accident, death of immediate family member, victim of violent crime, or diagnosis of learning disability.

- 2017-18 Appeals = 1361
- 2018-19 Appeals = 1427
- 2019-20 Appeals = 1494
- 2020-21 Appeals = 1248
- 2021-22 Appeals = 1115

1 FA Technical Specialist (1 FTE) who keeps Banner software system processes working, provides support to ensure compliance with financial aid policy, and performs database analysis of financial aid related data. The Technical Specialist manages the

systems and processes used in the disbursement of financial aid funds to students. The position assists with monitoring program budget allocations for Cal Grants, Federal SEOG, and Federal Work Study funds. The Technical Specialist helps create annual calendars with award cycles and disbursements for each year in compliance with regulations.

1 Administrative Assistant – Shared between Admissions & Records and Financial Aid (1 FTE) to support office operations, process check requests, make sure financial aid forms are stocked, and order supplies. This is a new position that was added to provide much needed clerical support to Student Services. This new position, hired in 2021, replaced the Part-Time Financial Aid Senior Secretary position that had been vacant since June 2018.

1 Director (1 FTE) responsible for management and administration of the Financial Aid Program. The Director is responsible for the accounting of 7 Categorical budgets and 1 General Fund Maintenance of Effort budget that are the funding source for financial aid operations. The Director is responsible for the timely completion of federal, state, and local reports such as; FISAP, Gainful Employment, MIS Reporting, SSARCC Expenditure Reporting, and Program Review. The Director maintains compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations governing student financial aid programs. Most importantly the Director serves the students to help them; receive financial support toward their education, maintain satisfactory academic progress, grow in their financial literacy, and complete their academic goals.

Providing Financial Support for Students

39.4 MILLION DOLLARS WAS DISBURSED TO 10,023 COS STUDENTS IN 2020-21!

Financial Aid Specialists processed applications, verified identity, reviewed tax transcripts, and verified high school graduation documents. Eligible students are awarded grants, works study, and loans.

- 51% of COS students received the Board of Governors Fee Waiver
- 32% of COS students received the Federal Pell Grant
- 14% of COS students received a Cal Grant

Attached to the Document Repository is a complete breakdown of Financial Aid Student Awards for the 2021-22 Academic Year.

Providing Outreach Support and Financial Aid Training

Last year the Outreach Specialist coordinated several outreach events.

2021-22 Outreach & Workshops = 60 Events

- 60 High School Workshops and Presentations at 22 schools
- 0 Counselor Trainings (cancelled due to pandemic)
- 3 COS/Financial Aid FAFSA events on campus

The COS Financial Aid office also takes a proactive approach to making students aware of the policies and procedures of financial aid. We give presentations and parent meetings and student orientations. Students receive information about applying for financial aid, maintaining satisfactory academic progress, and planning for financial aid disbursements.

What improvements are needed?: Financial Aid Office service is not equitable at all three campus locations as it pertains to FA Specialists and Clerical Assistants.

- Visalia – 4 FTE FA Specialists, and 2.5 FTE Clerical Assistants
- Tulare – 1 FTE FA Specialist, and 0.5 FTE Clerical Assistant
- Hanford – 0 FTE FA Specialist, and 0.5 FTE Clerical Assistant

Student traffic in Tulare and Hanford locations has been increasing. Walk up business and phone calls are increasing as student enrollment increase at the sites. There should be at least 1 FTE FA Specialist and 1 FTE Clerical Assistant at Tulare and Hanford.

Describe any external opportunities or challenges.:

FINANCIAL AID OUTREACH

COS Financial Aid Office continued to serve high schools as conditions surrounding the COVID-19 started to improve. In most cases, Zoom was the best way to maintain contact with our community. We usually attend many Parent Info Nights in September and October educating families about financial aid and completing the FAFSA/CADAA. We made video recordings of our parent presentation in English and Spanish. The videos were posted to Vimeo and the COS website. We shared links to the videos with all our high school partners so they could place them on their websites and share with families in lieu of in-person Parent Info Nights. Many high schools used Zoom to host Virtual Parent Nights. Financial Aid staff joined many of these Virtual Parent Nights to present financial aid information and answer questions. We did our best to accommodate the needs of the high schools as they struggled to serve their families during the pandemic. We offered FAFSA Workshops in person and via Zoom depending on the high school's preference.

Many of the outreach events take place in the evening hours. The Outreach Specialist is struggling to keep up with daily work duties and facilitating evening presentations. Some financial aid staff volunteer to help with evening workshops. Without their help, much of the high school outreach would not be possible. During the 2021 outreach season, staff were working all day on financial aid disbursements, and then helping at evening events 2-3 nights per week. Staff begin to show signs of burn out after months of 12 long workdays trying to support the outreach mission.

BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

Categorical budget constraints continue to be a concern of the FA Director. California has enjoyed positive economic conditions over the past few years. As a result, community college administrations have received cost of living adjustments that have been passed on as salary increases to staff. There has also been additional funding passed down to community colleges to improve student success programs. New financial aid grants have been created for community college students; the Student Success Completion Grant, AB19 Sequoias College Promise, Cal Grants for students with dependent children, CA Virtual College, and CARES Emergency Financial Aid Grants.

Additional funding has not been passed down to financial aid offices to keep up with growth happening at community colleges in other service areas. Categorical BFAP funding to community college financial aid offices does not allow for COLA increase. 40% of the financial aid program is categorically funded. 60% is MOE from general fund. Salary increases have pushed general fund budgets beyond the state required MOE. Discretionary funding in categorical budgets used for consulting, staff development, and outreach support have been greatly reduced to cover salary costs. Consultant costs are a necessary to keep the \$40 Million financial aid program running smoothly for students.

The State has not increased financial aid administrative funding for several years. Under the new Student Centered Funding Formula, MIS data shows that financial aid offices contribute 28% (2B) of revenue to their colleges. Yet only 4.2% of that revenue is reinvested into financial aid programs on campus. Administrative burden has significantly increased. Financial aid (and other student services) programs are being asked to implement additional grants, provide additional outreach, provide financial literacy training, support student success programs, support DACA/Dreamers, support foster youth students, support homeless students, and other new initiatives coming from the Chancellor's Office. Staff are already stressed to accomplish all that is being asked of them.

COST OF ATTENDANCE BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

A goal of California financial aid reform has been to close the gap between grant awards and financial aid Cost of Attendance budgets. The CA state budget has seen year over year grant aid increases for eligible students. The Students with Dependents addition to the Cal Grant program increases an \$1,648 Cal Grant B to \$6,000 and a \$1,094 Cal Grant C to \$4,000. The Student Success Completion Grant (SSCG) is doubling in 2022-23, from \$4,000 to \$8,000. Additionally, minimum wage in CA has been increasing. Effective January 2023, CA minimum wage will be \$15.50. Federal Work Study Students are earning more money as the minimum wage increases. With award amounts and wages both increasing, students are exceeding their Cost of Attendance budgets.

Student Cost of Attendance Budgets for 2022-23 are \$16,280 for a student living at home with parents and \$25,190 for a student living away from home. Student financial assistance awards cannot surpass the Cost of Attendance budget amount. An at-home student receiving full Pell Grant \$6,895, Cal Grant B \$1,648, and SSCG \$8,000 would receive \$16,543. That amount is \$263 beyond the allowable at-home budget. There is no room for additional program awards such as SEOG, EOPS, CARE, or Foster Youth. There is no additional budget for Federal Work Study. While surpassing the maximum allowable award threshold is not necessarily a bad thing. It puts a strain on the departments that are not able to award their annual allocations. They risk penalty from the federal and state entities that expect them to disburse their annual award allocations. It will be interesting to see how financial aid works with these departments to spend down their allocations.

COVID-19 CAMPUS DISRUPTIONS

Campus remained closed to students through August 2021 when it re-opened to students for the start of the Fall 2021 Semester. The 18 months of campus closure was a difficult time for the Financial Aid Office. At first staff were alternating workdays in the office and at home. Later when COVID-19 cases worsened, staff were working from home 5 days per week. The Director was the only financial aid employee working on site throughout the campus closure.

Monitoring staff activity and production was difficult. Staff would check-in at the start of the day and check-out in the evening. During the hours in-between it was hard to know what staff were working on. There was no way to track work activities

throughout the day. Some staff rose to the occasion, were present, and focused on serving students remotely. Other staff were never checking in and did the bare minimum to keep up with workload.

Serving students was difficult as well. When campus is open, students can visit the financial aid office, turn in documents, and have all their questions answered in one visit. With campus closed, students turned to phones and email as their only way to ask questions. Students could not drop off documents in person. Documents had to be mailed, faxed, or electronically uploaded to a secure drop box. Thankfully there were a couple financial aid student employees willing to come into the office to help process mail and fax documents.

Financial aid disbursements remained below pre-pandemic levels.

2019-20 Pell Disbursements = \$23.5M / 6,310 students

2020-21 Pell Disbursements = \$19.5M / 5,091 students

2021-22 Pell Disbursements = \$18.2M / 5256 students

More students were awarded Pell grants in 2022 than in 2021. However, award amounts were down. Students were returning to school as classrooms opened on campus, but they were not attending at full time unit loads. A greater number of students were receiving reduced financial aid awards at part-time status. That is why we were seeing more students awarded, but less grant dollars being disbursed.

FRAUD ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUSES

In a world of ever-increasing internet security threats, community colleges have fallen prey to bad actors. The Statewide CCC Apply application has been vulnerable to criminals setting up fake student accounts, exploiting email accounts, and registering for classes to gain access to college financial services. These criminals have also completed FAFSA applications as fake students with the intent of receiving grant aid disbursements. These activities ramped up during the Corona Virus Pandemic when most colleges closed down and switched to online teaching.

In response to these bad actors, financial aid has created a fraud report in the Argos reporting system. This report is a data table of student FAFSA application and COS registration information. We run the report monthly to look for unusual trends in student activity. In one case we noticed several student registrations all coming from a Colorado address and all registering in the same classes. All these student accounts were selected for identity verification. Financial aid was held until the students submitted documents to financial aid verifying their identity. Unsurprisingly, verification documents were never submitted. Financial aid was not disbursed to these fraudulent accounts. The financial aid office will continue to run the fraud report in an effort to keep bad actors from receiving financial aid funds through fake student accounts.

BASIC NEEDS INITIATIVE

Assembly Bills 132 & 2881, 2021-2022 legislative year, both require California Community Colleges to create a Basic Needs Center on campus. The Basic Needs Center will be a central location on campus where basic needs services, resources, and staff would be made available to students. The bills require the Basic Needs Center, to help students enroll in CalFresh and other relevant government benefit programs, and support students experiencing housing, food, and mental health insecurity. The Bills also direct the Basic Needs Center to coordinate with their campus financial aid office. The role of the financial aid office is to reduce student financial insecurities. The COS Financial Aid Office is committed to working with the Basic Needs Center in support of our students. However, we are unsure how that partnership will be put into action. The College is still forming the Basic Needs Center, and putting policies and procedures in place. While our role to play still has some unknowns, the Financial Aid Office is excited to be part of this new support service for students.

Overall SAO Achievement: The Financial Aid Office continues to maximize available resources and employee talent to best serve and support students despite the ongoing challenges we are all experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the financial aid landscape is changing. We explore new ways of serving students, recognizing a need to adapt with changes in Federal and State aid programs.

Changes Based on SAO Achievement: Serving students through a global pandemic has changed the way we do business. We have adapted and learned new skills. The use of Zoom was a game changer. It helps us stay connected with each other through quarantine periods. Before the pandemic, Zoom video meetings were not a part of our workday. Now Zoom meetings are common and staff are comfortable using the software. We have also taken a step forward in the use of electronic documents. During the pandemic, an electronic "Dropbox" was set up to allow students a way to securely upload financial aid documents while campus offices were closed to the public. We are also working to implement a product called "Dynamic Forms" to continue offering students the option to submit forms via electronic signatures.

Outcome cycle evaluation: Year over year, the Financial Aid office continues to operate effectively and efficiently considering

the number of students served and the amount of funds disbursed. FA staff processed 15,004 FAFSA/CADAA applications during the 2021-22 year. Total financial aid recipients were 16,290 and total financial aid disbursements were \$54.7M (Includes 19.7M Federal HEERF Pandemic relief disbursed to students). The 2020-21 year student loan default rate decreased from 18.5% to 14.2%.

Related Documents:

[Budget_Book_FinAid Final 2021-22.pdf](#)

Action: Using Better Customer Service to Increase Financial Aid Awards

Financial Aid Department staff will contact and assist students who have not turned in necessary paperwork to complete the financial aid file. Taking this extra step with students improves customer service and increases the percentage of students receiving a financial aid award.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2021 - 2022

Leave Blank:

Leave Blank:

Identify related course/program outcomes:

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Financial Aid Director

Rationale (With supporting data): There has always been a percentage of students who are eligible to receive a financial aid award, but do not receive an award. These are students who have completed a FAFSA or Dream Act application and are in good standing, but for some reason never complete their financial aid file. With the implementation of the Student Centered Funding Formula and the creation of California Community College Chancellor's Office Vision for Success, more attention has been focused on student financial aid awards. Community College Financial Aid Offices throughout the state have been brainstorming ways to close the gap on students who miss out on financial aid. How can we catch those students who fall through the cracks?

The COS Financial Aid Office is a busy place. Annually, we serve over 10,000 financial aid eligible students. There are only 14 financial aid employees across three campus locations. At those student ratios, it is impossible to offer one on one personalized service. We have to do the best we can to answer all student questions, package their financial aid, and disburse their awards in a timely manner. It has always been the responsibility of the student to complete applications and turn in required documents to the financial aid office. It has always been the responsibility of the student to self-advocate and ask questions when they need help. The reality is that many of our students are not there yet. They need help.

Our Goal for 2019-20:

We are going to find those financial aid eligible students that have completed a financial aid application, but were not paid at the beginning of the semester. We are going to reach out to those students and offer one on one customer service. We are going to help them complete their financial aid documentation. Through these actions, we will improve customer service. We will increase the number of students receiving a financial aid award.

Priority: Medium

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2022 - 2023

10/10/2022

Status: Action Completed

We now have a reliable "Incomplete Report" that we can run at any time to see which students still have outstanding financial aid documents. It has become part of our regular work to continuously work with students on the list to help them complete the verification process. We contact students via email, phone, and mail. We work to target students who would be eligible for aid once verification is complete. This will be a regular work activity in the financial aid office moving forward.

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Update Year: 2021-2022

10/14/2021

Status: Continue Action Next Year

Program Review - Financial Aid

During the past year, were able to develop reports of students with incomplete financial aid files. Student employees worked through the reports student by student. They mailed letters to students with copies of forms needed to complete their financial aid files. They also emailed students reminding them that once they submitted the required forms, we could package their financial aid awards. Many students completed the forms and mailed them back to the financial aid office. This was a worthwhile accomplishment and we have continued to repeat the process at least once each semester. The overall goal in working through the Incomplete Student Report was to narrow the gap of eligible students who did not receive financial aid. However, that is impossible to measure at this time due to the number of students who stopped attending school because of the pandemic. We will continue to work the Incomplete Student List moving forward. Hopefully, as we return to pre-pandemic attendance levels, we will also see an increase in the percentage of eligible students receiving financial aid.

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 1.1 - The District will increase FTES by 1.75% over the three years

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years

Action: COS College Reimbursement-AB19

This is an assessment to collect data on the College's reimbursement program and use of AB19 funding.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2019 - 2020, 2020 - 2021, 2021 - 2022, 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

Leave Blank:

Identify related course/program outcomes:

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Director, Financial Aid

Rationale (With supporting data): This is an assessment to collect data on the College's reimbursement program and use of AB19 funding. COS received AB19 funding for the 2018-19 year. First year students who are not eligible for financial aid can have their enrollment fees reimbursed if they attempt and complete at least 15 units per semester. I plan to evaluate the success of the reimbursement program and how AB19 funds are expended. I hope to be able to answer the following questions. Are enough students being awarded reimbursement funding? Are the students who receive reimbursement funding successful? Are they completing their program in 2 years? Is the State consistent in awarding funding each year? Is the college using AB19 funds for other student success oriented purposes if the funding is not being used for reimbursement awards?

Priority: Low

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2022 - 2023

10/10/2022

Status: Continue Action Next Year

The following Promise Awards were applied in the 2021-22 year.

Fall Semester

- Waivers 266
- Grants = 75 Students

Spring Semester

- Waivers = 226 Students
- Grants = 64 Students

Program Review - Financial Aid

Awards by Year

- 2018-19 = 157 Student Reimbursements
- 2019-20 = 384 Student Reimbursements
- 2020-21 = 544 Student Waivers + 1,289 Grants
- 2021-22 = 492 Student Waivers + 139 Grants

All first year and second year students enrolled in 12 units at census had their fees waived through the Sequoias Promise. Additional grants of \$650 were awarded to students attending beyond their second year. These students met all other criteria of a Sequoias Promise. By providing waivers at the beginning of term, and additional grants to students enrolled full time, we are having our most successful year at helping students succeed in their academic goals via the Sequoias Promise!

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Update Year: 2021-2022

10/15/2021

Status: Continue Action Next Year

The following Promise Awards were applied in the 2020-21 year.

Fall Semester

- Waivers 311
- Grants = 655 Students

Spring Semester

- Waivers = 233 Students
- Grants = 634 Students

Awards by Year

- 2018-19 = 157 Student Reimbursements
- 2019-20 = 384 Student Reimbursements
- 2020-21 = 544 Student Waivers + 1,289 Grants

All first year and second year students enrolled in 12 units at census had their fees waived through the Sequoias Promise. Additional grants of \$650 were awarded to students attending beyond their second year. These students met all other criteria of a Sequoias Promise. By providing waivers at the beginning of term, and additional grants to students enrolled full time, we are having our most successful year at helping students succeed in their academic goals via the Sequoias Promise!

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 1.1 - The District will increase FTES by 1.75% over the three years

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years

District Objective 2.3 - By 2021, increase the percentage of students who complete transfer-level English by 15 percentage points and transfer-level math by 10 percentage point with their first year.

District Objective 2.4 - By 2021, Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by 5 percentage points

District Objective 4.1 - Increase the use of data for decision-making at the District and department/unit level

Action: Hire Full-Time Financial Aid Technical Specialist

Program Review - Financial Aid

The Financial Aid Office needs additional technical support to meet increasing administrative burden placed upon financial aid office leadership.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2021 - 2022, 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

Leave Blank:

Identify related course/program outcomes: The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with how the college receives its funding. The Equity Component of the new Student Centered Funding Formula is based entirely on the number of students who receive a Pell Grant and/or a California College Promise Grant. Now, more than ever, financial aid offices are under pressure to maximize student financial aid awards.

The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Objective 1.1 to increase FTES by 2.0% over three years. The COS Financial Aid Office processed over 15,000 financial aid applications from incoming and continuing students last year. The Financial Aid Office provides FAFSA application support to 35 feeder high schools in the College service area. Through financial aid outreach services to these high schools, the Financial Aid Office helps generate FTE's for the College. Through continued receipt of financial aid awards, students are able to remain at the College until completion of their academic goal.

The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Goal #2. Many students are able to complete their degree, certificate, and transfer objectives because of the financial aid they receive. Over 60% of COS students depend on financial aid to make it possible to attend college. Last year, \$37 Million worth of aid was awarded to over 10,000 COS students.

The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Objective 4.2 through reliable operational procedures and good communication with District departments. Efficient operational procedures mean students receive aid in a timely manner and are able to attend school with less financial worry.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Financial Aid Director

Rationale (With supporting data): The addition of a full-time Financial Aid Technical Specialist will help strengthen the backbone of the Financial Aid Office. The Director, along with the Technical Specialist keep the Financial Aid Office in good operational order. All other Financial Aid Staff look to the Director and Technical Specialist for answers to policy questions, new program procedures and Banner processing issues.

Over the past 5 years, additional financial aid programs have been introduced by Federal and State legislation. The financial aid program has been asked to implement additional grants, provide additional outreach, provide financial literacy training, support student success programs, support DACA/Dreamers, support foster youth students, support homeless students, and implement other new initiatives. The Director and Technical Specialist workload has grown beyond their ability to manage it. They struggle to keep up with the administrative responsibility of managing new student programs and required reporting.

New programs and administrative burden placed on FA Technical Specialist over the past several years.

- 2015-16 Full Time Student Success Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2017-18 Community College Completion Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2017-08 Emergency Grant for Dreamer Students – New FA Award Program
- 2018-19 Student Success Completion Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2018-19 FA Technology Grant Allocation – New Categorical Funding Program
- 2018-19 (AB-19) Sequoias Promise – New FA Award Program
- 2019-20 Dream Act Service Incentive Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2019-20 CSAC Students With Dependents – New FA Award Program
- 2019-20 NEXT-Up Program – FA Resourcing
- 2019-20 EOPS – FA Resourcing
- 2020-21 CA Online College (CVC) – Consortium Agreement Request
- 2020-21 Foundation Finish Line Scholarship Program – Identify Eligible Students
- 2020-21 COVID-19 Disaster Relief Emergency Funds – New FA Award Program
- 2020-21 COVID Response Block Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2020-21 (SB-85) Emergency Financial Assistance to Low Income Community College Students – New FA Award Program
- 2020-21 Cal Works Emergency Grants – local funding shift

Program Review - Financial Aid

- 2020-21 HEERF 1 – Emergency Relief Funds to Students – disbursements & reporting
- 2020-21 HEERF 2 & 3 – Emergency Relief Funds to Students – disbursements & reporting
- 2021-22 Dream Act Service Incentive Grant – Renewed FA Award Program
- 2021-22 Fraud Issues within Community College System – policies, procedures, reporting.
- 2022-23 Cal Grant Reform – Changes to Grants and Awarding Processes
- 2022-23 FAFSA and PELL Grant – Changes

The programs listed above all represent new work added to the Financial Aid Office in setting up systems for processing and disbursement, in data collection and reporting, and in desk work identifying eligible students. These programs represent work over and above the baseline programs offered by the financial aid office. The addition of a second technical specialist will help the Director and current Technical Specialist manage special projects, communicate to students, design policy and procedure, and support other financial aid staff.

Priority: High

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2022 - 2023

10/10/2022

Status: Continue Action Next Year

The resource request was approved. The new FA Technical Specialist recruitment will take place Fall Semester 2022. Funding for the position is 50% General Fund and 50% Promise Fund.

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Resources Description

Personnel - Classified/Confidential - The Financial Aid Office needs additional technical support to meet increasing administrative burden placed upon financial aid office leadership. The Director and Technical Specialist workload has grown beyond their ability to manage it. They struggle to keep up with the administrative responsibility of managing new student programs and required reporting. (Active)

Why is this resource required for this action?: The addition of a full-time Financial Aid Technical Specialist will help strengthen the backbone of the Financial Aid Office. The Director, along with the Technical Specialist keep the Financial Aid Office in good operational order. All other Financial Aid Staff look to the Director and Technical Specialist for answers to policy questions, new program procedures and Banner processing issues.

Over the past 5 years, additional financial aid programs have been introduced by Federal and State legislation. The financial aid program has been asked to implement additional grants, provide additional outreach, provide financial literacy training, support student success programs, support DACA/Dreamers, support foster youth students, support homeless students, and implement other new initiatives. The Director and Technical Specialist workload has grown beyond their ability to manage it. They struggle to keep up with the administrative responsibility of managing new student programs and required reporting.

New programs and administrative burden placed on FA Technical Specialist over the past several years.

- 2015-16 Full Time Student Success Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2017-18 Community College Completion Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2017-08 Emergency Grant for Dreamer Students – New FA Award Program
- 2018-19 Student Success Completion Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2018-19 FA Technology Grant Allocation – New Categorical Funding Program
- 2018-19 (AB-19) Sequoias Promise – New FA Award Program
- 2019-20 Dream Act Service Incentive Grant – New FA Award Program
- 2019-20 CSAC Students With Dependents – New FA Award Program

Program Review - Financial Aid

- 2019-20 NEXT-Up Program – FA Resourcing
- 2019-20 EOPS – FA Resourcing
- 2020-21 CA Online College (CVC) – Consortium Agreement Request
- 2020-21 Foundation Finish Line Scholarship Program – Identify Eligible Students
- 2020-21 COVID-19 Disaster Relief Emergency Funds – New FA Award Program
- 2020-21 COVID Response Block Grant – New Fa Award Program
- 2020-21 (SB-85) Emergency Financial Assistance to Low Income Community College Students – New FA Award Program
- 2020-21 Cal Works Emergency Grants – local funding shift
- 2020-21 HEERF 1 – Emergency Relief Funds to Students – disbursements & reporting
- 2020-21 HEERF 2 & 3 – Emergency Relief Funds to Students – disbursements & reporting
- 2021-22 Dream Act Service Incentive Grant – Renewed FA Award Program
- 2021-22 Fraud Issues within Community College System – policies, procedures, reporting.
- 2022-23 Cal Grant Reform – Changes to Grants and Awarding Processes
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Notes (optional): A Classified employee full time 12 month at range 36 step 2 salary is \$57,117. Benefits at current rate 33.1802% are \$18,952 plus current health cost \$18,772. Total cost salary and benefits would be \$94,841 at current salary and benefits.

Cost of Request (Nothing will be funded over the amount listed.): 94841

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021
District Objective 1.1 - The District will increase FTES by 1.75% over the three years
District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years
District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years
District Objective 2.4 - By 2021, Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by 5 percentage points
District Objective 4.2 - Improve organizational effectiveness by strengthening operations of and communication between District departments, divisions, and constituents

Action: Hire Support Services Technician (Range 26-29)

The proposed Support Services Technician will be an employee with expertise in Financial Aid (FA) and Admissions & Records (AR) policies and procedures. This new position will move the one-stop model to the next level by taking the service to the student. It will place technicians with financial aid, admissions, and registration expertise in areas with the greatest student traffic and need; Counseling, AAC, Athletics, EOPS, Basic Needs, and Student Success.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

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Identify related course/program outcomes: The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with how the college receives its funding. The Equity Component of the new Student Centered Funding Formula is based entirely on the number of

Program Review - Financial Aid

students who receive a Pell Grant and/or a California College Promise Grant. Now, more than ever, financial aid offices are under pressure to maximize student financial aid awards.

The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Objective 1.1 to increase FTES by 2.0% over three years. The COS Financial Aid Office processed over 15,000 financial aid applications from incoming and continuing students last year. The Financial Aid Office provides FAFSA application support to 35 feeder high schools in the College service area. Through financial aid outreach services to these high schools, the Financial Aid Office helps generate FTE's for the College. Through continued receipt of financial aid awards, students are able to remain at the College until completion of their academic goal.

The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Goal #2. Many students are able to complete their degree, certificate, and transfer objectives because of the financial aid they receive. Over 60% of COS students depend on financial aid to make it possible to attend college. Last year, \$37 Million worth of aid was awarded to over 10,000 COS students.

The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Objective 4.2 through reliable operational procedures and good communication with District departments. Efficient operational procedures mean students receive aid in a timely manner and are able to attend school with less financial worry.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Director of Financial Aid

Rationale (With supporting data): The proposed Support Services Technician will be an employee with expertise in Financial Aid (FA) and Admissions & Records (AR) policies and procedures. The employee would have a workstation set up in a department of high student traffic and need of FA-AR assistance. Students receiving service in Counseling, AAC, and Athletics often leave those departments with instructions to visit FA-AR to complete and turn in additional paperwork. With a Support Services Technician already in alternate departments the Technician can answer the students questions, help the student complete required forms, and scan forms into the FA-AR system. The student would be able to leave that department with everything taken care of. In the FA-AR departments, the Specialists would process the forms submitted by the technician and update the students record.

The way we serve students is changing. The old "silo" style way of offering service to students is becoming less effective. Other colleges are adopting a one-stop service center approach to serve students. The Hanford Hub and Tulare Student Center are ahead of the Visalia Campus in their more efficient ability to serve students.

With this new position, I am proposing to take the one-stop model to the next level by taking the service to the student. I want to place technicians with financial aid, admissions, and registration expertise in areas with the greatest student traffic and need. I want to stop bouncing Visalia students from department to department to get specialized assistance when we could be taking care of the students at their first stop in Counseling, AAC, Athletics, EOPS, Student Success, and Basic Needs. Over time, staffing in the Financial Aid and A&R Offices would form a balance of staff serving in office and alternate locations.

The Counseling Office is an example of an ideal location to place a Support Services Technician. Counseling and Financial Aid are interconnected in many ways. The Support Services Technician would be able to help with CVC-OIE and CPOS Degree Audit issues. During counseling appointments, students often ask their counselors about financial aid issues such as, approved majors, eligible classes, SAP appeals, and special circumstances. With a Support Services Technician in the office, counselors would be able to hand the student off to the technician after the SEP appointment. The technician would be able to communicate with FA-AR to help resolve and student issues. This would hopefully reduce confusion and frustration for the student who would otherwise be going back and forth between departments. This same approach to helping students could work in other departments where a large percentage of students served are financial aid students.

Priority: Medium

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Resources Description

Personnel - Classified/Confidential - The proposed Support Services Technician will be an employee with expertise in Financial Aid (FA) and Admissions & Records (AR) policies and procedures. The employee would have a workstation set up in a department of high student traffic and need of FA-AR assistance. Students receiving service in Counseling, AAC, and

Program Review - Financial Aid

Athletics often leave those departments with instructions to visit FA-AR to complete and turn in additional paperwork. With a Support Services Technician already in alternate departments the Technician can answer the students questions, help the student complete required forms, and scan forms into the FA-AR system. The student would be able to leave that department with everything taken care of. In the FA-AR departments, the Specialists would process the forms submitted by the technician and update the students record.

(Active)

Why is this resource required for this action?: The way we serve students is changing. The old “silo” style way of offering service to students is becoming less effective. Other colleges are adopting a one-stop service center approach to serve students. The Hanford Hub and Tulare Student Center are ahead of the Visalia Campus in their more efficient ability to serve students.

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Notes (optional): A Classified employee full time 12 month at range 29 step 2 salary is \$51,667. Benefits at current rate 35.6295% are \$18,409 plus current health cost \$19,138. Total cost salary and benefits would be \$89,214 at current salary and benefits.

Cost of Request (Nothing will be funded over the amount listed.): 89214

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2021-2025

District Objective 1.1 - The District will increase FTES 2% from 2021 to 2025.

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the number of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and non-CTE) by 5% from 2021-2025.

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who are transfer-ready by 15% and students who transfer to four-year institutions by 10% from 2021-2025.

District Objective 2.4 - Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by five percentage points (job closely related to field of study and attainment of a livable wage) and the number of CTE students who successfully complete 9+ CTE units in a single year by 10% from 2021-2025.

District Objective 4.2 - Improve communication practices needed to support organizational effectiveness and continuous improvement across all District units and constituents from 2021-2025.

Action: 2022-2031 Learning Aligned Employment Program (LAEP)

This SAO will track the progress of the 9-year LAEP Grant. This will include information on the work study programs established and the number of students served.

Leave Blank:

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Implementation Timeline: 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

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Identify related course/program outcomes: LAEP offers eligible underrepresented students at public colleges and universities the opportunity to earn money to help defray their educational costs while gaining education-aligned, career-related employment.

For the purpose of determining LAEP eligibility, “underrepresented” students include first generation college students, low-income students, students who are current or former foster youth, homeless students or those at risk of becoming homeless, students with disabilities, displaced workers, students with dependent children, formerly incarcerated students, undocumented students, and students who are veterans. Further priority will be given to eligible students majoring in a (STEM) discipline.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Jonna Schengel-Dean CTE & Workforce Development, David Loverin-Director of Financial Aid, Elvia Rangel-Work Study Specialist, Ashley Land-Career Services Coordinator

Rationale (With supporting data): College of the Sequoias received a \$4M LAEP grant to be disbursed over 9 years. LAEP is a work experience program administered by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) designed to offer eligible underrepresented students at public colleges the opportunity to earn money to help defray their educational costs while gaining education-aligned, career-related employment. LAEP allows a participating student placement in an educationally beneficial position that relates to the student’s area of study.

COS Financial Aid Office will be working with Career Technical Education and Workforce Development Department staff to develop work study opportunities with community partners. FA Work Study will assist with the employer work study contracts, and processing student applications. Our goal in the first year is to start small with one work study program, adding additional programs in future years.

This SAO will track the progress of the LAEP Grant. This will include information on the work study programs established and the number of students served.

Priority: Low

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2021-2025

District Objective 3.2 - Increase the course success rate by 10% for each disproportionately impacted student group in their transfer level Quantitative Reasoning and English courses by the end of their first year from 2021-2025.

Action: California Virtual College – Online Education Initiative (CVC-OEI)

This SAO will track the progress of CVC-OEI implementation, the administrative process of the CVC-OEI, and the growth of the program through student enrollment.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

Leave Blank:

Identify related course/program outcomes: The CVC-OEI has a direct correlation with District Goal #2. It is designed to help student finish their academic programs on time by offering online courses that may not be available at the student’s home campus.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Director of Financial Aid

Rationale (With supporting data): College of the Sequoias will be participating in the CVC-OEI as a Home College and Teaching College. The Financial Aid Office will also be signing the CVC Financial Aid Consortium Agreement.

Program Review - Financial Aid

COS students looking for additional online class opportunities will be able to connect to CVC, search for, and register for an available class from another community college offering the class through CVC as a teaching college. COS will act as the home college for that student. Visa versa, a student from another community college will be able to register for an available COS class with COS acting as the teaching college. Students will be eligible to receive financial aid for the online classes through the financial aid consortium agreement. Designated COS Financial Aid Office staff will have to track the academic progress of each student using the CVC Exchange to make sure aid is appropriately disbursed per Federal consortium agreement policies and procedures.

This SAO will track the progress of CVC-OEI implementation, the administrative process of the CVC-OEI, and the growth of the program through student enrollment.

Priority: Medium

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: Yes

Safety/Mandate Explanation: As a condition of receiving 2022-23 COVID-19 Emergency Conditions funding, the CA Chancellor's Office mandated COS must become a member of the CVC exchange as a Home College and a Teaching College. Additionally, the COS Financial Aid Office must sign the CVC Financial Aid Consortium Agreement and disburse financial aid to eligible COS students taking classes through the CVC exchange.

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2021-2025
District Objective 2.1 - Increase the number of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and non-CTE) by 5% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who are transfer-ready by 15% and students who transfer to four-year institutions by 10% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.3 - Increase the percentage of students who complete both transfer-level Quantitative Reasoning and English by 10 percentage points by the end of their first year from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.4 - Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by five percentage points (job closely related to field of study and attainment of a livable wage) and the number of CTE students who successfully complete 9+ CTE units in a single year by 10% from 2021-2025.

Action: Course Program of Study – Degree Audit (CPOS)

COS Financial Aid will be implementing CPOS Degree Audit starting Spring 2023 Semester. A CPOS degree audit will be run on all students before each financial aid disbursement and only award Federal Financial Aid for courses that count towards a student's degree or certificate. This SAO will analyze the implementation of CPOS Degree Audit and any changes in student financial aid disbursements.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

Leave Blank:

Identify related course/program outcomes: CPOS has a direct correlation with District Goal #2. It is designed to help student finish their academic programs on time by following their Student Education Plans.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Director of Financial Aid

Rationale (With supporting data): Federal Student Aid (FSA) policy states that a school cannot award Federal Title IV aid for course work that will not count towards the completion of a student's degree. To align with this FSA policy, COS Financial Aid will be implementing CPOS Degree Audit starting Spring 2023 Semester. A CPOS degree audit will be run on all students before each financial aid disbursement and only award Federal Financial Aid for courses that count towards a student's degree or certificate. For example, if a student is enrolled in 12 units, but only 9 of those units count toward completion of their major, the student will receive Federal aid at three-quarter time for the 9 units and State aid at full-time for the 12 units. Enrollment status (full time 12+ units, three-quarter time 9-11 units, half time 6-8 units, or less than half time 1-5 units) is what determines the amount of federal financial aid the student is eligible to receive.

Program Review - Financial Aid

Priority: High

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: Yes

Safety/Mandate Explanation: Federal Student Aid (FSA) policy states that a school cannot award Federal Title IV aid for course work that will not count towards the completion of a student's degree.

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2021-2025
District Objective 2.1 - Increase the number of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and non-CTE) by 5% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who are transfer-ready by 15% and students who transfer to four-year institutions by 10% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.3 - Increase the percentage of students who complete both transfer-level Quantitative Reasoning and English by 10 percentage points by the end of their first year from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.4 - Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by five percentage points (job closely related to field of study and attainment of a livable wage) and the number of CTE students who successfully complete 9+ CTE units in a single year by 10% from 2021-2025.

Action: Implement State Fiscal Recovery Funds – Emergency Financial Assistance Grants

Included in the 2022-23 State Budget were allocations to community colleges to disburse Emergency Financial Assistance Grants to students. This SAO will track implementation and award of the Emergency Financial Assistance Grants to students.

Leave Blank:

Implementation Timeline: 2022 - 2023

Leave Blank:

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Identify related course/program outcomes: The work of the Financial Aid Office has a direct correlation with District Goal #2. Many students are able to complete their degree, certificate, and transfer objectives because of the financial aid they receive. Over 60% of COS students depend on financial aid to make it possible to attend college.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): David Loverin, Director of Financial Aid

Rationale (With supporting data): Included in the 2022-23 State Budget were allocations to community colleges to disburse Emergency Financial Assistance Grants to students. The Emergency Financial Assistance Grants program was designed to promote equitable outcomes and close emergency aid gaps by providing funds to students who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COS Financial Aid Office allocation is \$1,642,713. All funds must be awarded to students by December 1, 2024 and disbursed by December 31, 2026. Any funds not awarded before June 30, 2024 may be reallocated to other districts.

Grants may be awarded to students who are California residents who self-certify that they meet the following eligibility criteria: U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens, currently enrolled in credit or noncredit courses at a California community college, demonstrate an emergency financial aid need, qualify as low-income by meeting the requirements to receive a California College Promise Grant (CCPG) or is projected to receive a CCPG for the upcoming term.

The College may establish awarding criteria, award amounts, and procedures to ensure equitable distribution of funds to students. Emergency aid should not have a negative impact on a student's financial aid package and where applicable, the financial aid office should exercise professional judgment to increase the student's cost of attendance. Funds are meant to supplement, and not supplant, existing student aid provided to qualifying students.

Priority: High

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Program Review - Financial Aid

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2021-2025
District Objective 2.1 - Increase the number of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and non-CTE) by 5% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who are transfer-ready by 15% and students who transfer to four-year institutions by 10% from 2021-2025.
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District Objective 2.4 - Increase the percentage of CTE students who achieve their employment objectives by five percentage points (job closely related to field of study and attainment of a livable wage) and the number of CTE students who successfully complete 9+ CTE units in a single year by 10% from 2021-2025.
District Objective 3.2 - Increase the course success rate by 10% for each disproportionately impacted student group in their transfer level Quantitative Reasoning and English courses by the end of their first year from 2021-2025.