

**Humboldt State University
Financial Aid Office
2013-2014 Annual Report**

1. Mission

State your department mission. Discuss how the unit supports the broader university mission. Discuss how the unit evaluates its effectiveness in meeting the divisional mission.

Narrative

***Mission statement:** The HSU Financial Aid Office is committed to assisting students seeking resources to finance their education by administering federal, state, and institutional aid programs, and providing a fair, sensitive, and confidential environment in which students can receive a variety of counseling and other resources to assist in making informed financial decisions.*

The Financial Aid Office is committed to student success. In collaboration with other offices within Enrollment Management, as well as Student Affairs, RISS, and Student Financial Services, we support student success by providing clear and timely communications and counseling, maximizing aid with fair and equitable awards, and teaching financial literacy through offering workshops, newsletters and outreach.

2. Goals

Describe the service under review, emphasizing the unit's goals, and its impact on student success. Goals might include delivery of a specific service, compliance with state or federally mandated monitoring, or other activities directed at providing support to the institution or to students.

*If the unit's goals have changed since the last self-evaluation, explain how and why they have changed. Show how the changes responded to changing needs, technologies, external requirements, and/or other relevant factors.

*This will be accomplished in the second year of review.

Narrative

Objectives

1. Education

As of June, we are nearing completion of the search process for a new Assistant Director of Student Services for the Financial Aid Office. This is a new position in Financial Aid, retooled from the previous positions of Loan Coordinator and Supervisor of Intake Services. The Assistant Director will engage in the planning, development and implementation of comprehensive student financial aid services that are responsive to the needs and requirements of students, parents, University staff and faculty, as well as the community. The Assistant Director

will educate and promote awareness of student aid programs and financial literacy through presentations, correspondence, the web site, social media, Prezi, and other creative and innovative technological means available now and in the future.

2. Enrollment

Through collaboration, cooperation and shared vision with offices within and without Enrollment Management, Financial Aid has become more aware of methods that aid can be used to support campus priorities. The previously described changes in State University Grant awarding is a good example of changing perspectives and processes to better support both the recruitment of students who want to attend, and the retention of students who want to stay. We intend to continue to expand on these ideas and methods through additional data analysis and shared vision.

3. Excellence in Customer Service

We will continue to seek additional ways to provide timely, accurate and supportive information to our customers: students, families, the campus and the community. Communication will be a large part of this: enhancing our current communications through the implementation of CommGen – allowing greater flexibility and customization of emails to students – and involvement in the ongoing work of the EM Communication Team which seeks to build a comprehensive picture of all student communications in order to strive for consistency, seek ways to collaborate, and fill gaps.

4. Efficiency

Although we have reached a “cruising altitude” after a steep ascent of implementations, upgrades and automation, we will continue to seek improvements by eliminating redundancies in processes. There will always be students and procedures and situations that must be handled manually. But efficiency in business operations leaves us more time for individual and group student interaction, mentoring and relationship building.

3. Department Effectiveness

Describe your clients in terms of their roles on campus (student, staff, administrators, etc.), and reflect on whether you are serving the groups you are expected to serve (in terms of diversity, program goals, etc.). Describe how the unit engages all members in the discussion, review, assessment and relevant factors. How and when has your unit assessed program outcomes, and how have you responded to the results? What changes have been made based on the result of the assessed outcome?

If data is available, describe how well your program is doing in terms of the following outcomes:

- Volume of unit activity (number of students/clients served, number of appointments, etc.)
- Efficiency (responsiveness, timeliness, number of requests processed, etc.)
- Effectiveness of service in accomplishing intended outcomes (accuracy, completeness, etc.)
- Client/student satisfaction with services (data needs to be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, abilities, etc.)

Describe how program or achievement outcomes relate to the unit goals.

Narrative

Accomplishments

Improvement in awarding of State University Grant

Managing funds is challenging, particularly the State University Grant (SUG). With awards going out to all applicants, past years have found us either overcommitting millions of dollars in order to offer to all eligible applicants, or not being able to award eligible applicants or continuing students who filed by the 3/2 priority deadline until later in the summer.

This year, based on an analysis of applicants to enrolled students, we were able to predict “likely to attend” students based on one of a number of factors (registration for HOP, Housing deposit, FA requirements submitted, etc.). Analysis of these factors aligned accurately with a student’s placement of HSU as #1 school on their list of schools on the FAFSA.

By targeting only these students out of all applicants with State University Grant, we were able to free up funds to award SUG to all eligible continuing students who met the 3/2 priority deadline. This should greatly assist in retention of continuing students, and assures that applicants with a great desire to attend have the full picture of their award early enough to make an informed decision. This improvement also greatly reduces the number of manual awards and wait lists for FA counselors.

Scholarship Improvements

A new, improved online scholarship application system, **AcademicWorks**, was implemented for the 2013-14 year. The new application is much more streamlined and user-friendly than the previous system, leading to a dramatic increase in applications: from 2,057 in 2013-14, to 4,796 in 2014-15, an increase of 233%. The review process for departments was also made simpler by the implementation of AcademicWorks, and departmental Academic Support Coordinators were trained individually on the use of the new system. Based on processes this first year, more improvements will be made for next year’s cycle. Additionally, we plan to utilize more of the new system’s additional features, including External Awards and Donor pages.

A **Scholarship Awarding Committee** was instituted this year for the awarding of FAO scholarships for 2014-15. Composed of representatives from Financial Aid, Admissions, EOP, and faculty, the group discussed and took into consideration campus priorities when awarding unrestricted scholarships.

A **Scholarship Task Force** has also been convened, to begin the process of reviewing and improving campus-wide policies and procedures regarding scholarships.

4. Department Improvement

Discuss how the unit addresses improvement. What activities has your unit engaged in to improve the administrative support service and environment?

Narrative

Assessment

As communications continue to improve, and processes get faster due to automation, students are reaping the benefit. Even with an increase in both FAFSA applications and HSU enrollment, we

were able to vastly improve the number of students who had aid disburse prior to the start of classes in Fall term 2013.

Aid Yr	Count	Comm Date
2010	3,056	8/18/2009
2011	3,351	8/17/2010
2012	3,744	8/15/2011
2013	4,637	8/13/2012
2014	5,065	8/19/2013

The above table represents the number of notifications sent following the first disbursement of the Fall term for each of the aid years. The increase from 2012-13 to 2013-14 was almost 10%. The increase over the full five year period shown above was an impressive 66%.

The more students who have their fees paid and/or their aid in hand when the term begins, the fewer calls we get, the shorter our lines are, the more time we have to spend on students with special circumstances and unique needs. This also frees students from worry and hassle about their aid, allowing them to focus on their academics.

5. Department Environment

- 1) Discuss the unit's environment, including the relationships among staff and program engagement with other units or support areas.
- 2) Discuss the unit's engagement in institutional efforts and activities.
- 3) Discuss facilities, staff and equipment assigned to the unit and how well they support unit goals.
- 4) Indicate the specific hours the unit operates and describe how the scheduled hours of availability meet the demand for services. If the unit operates during other than normal business hours, specify how these additional times meet the needs of other units/programs/students.
- 5) Describe the influences that external factors, such as state laws, changing demographics, and the characteristics of the students/clients served have on the structure and services of the program and how the unit addresses these factors.
- 6) Describe the interactions between this unit and other units/programs on campus and any particular influences these interactions have on the ability of the unit to meet its goals.

Narrative Sources

- [XLS] 13-14 FAO D20019 PREP Staffing rpt April 2014

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Present any conclusions and recommendations resulting from the self-evaluation process, referencing any of the topics in the study. Include information on how the unit engages all unit members in the self-evaluation dialogue and how everyone participates in the program review process.

- 1) Summarize your areas of strength and areas that need improvement.
- 2) Identify strategies for the future. Discuss any projected changes and anticipate how the changes may affect staffing, facilities, equipment, and other operational areas.

Narrative

Conclusion

With a permanent Director now in place, and a modest reorganization of leadership with the upcoming and revamped position of Assistant Director of Student Services, the Financial Aid Office will soon be fully staffed and in excellent shape. Services to students will continue to improve, especially in the more “pro-active” arena of financial literacy and outreach, and efficiencies will continue to be found and finessed. Increased teamwork and collaboration with people and departments across campus is encouraged and welcomed.

Goals for 2014-15:

1. Expand financial literacy initiatives for all students, from prospect to graduate.
2. Extensive data analysis of 4-5 years of awarding, as it relates to yield and retention, to achieve more purposeful strategies in awarding aid.
3. Review and refine all communications (via email, portal, social media, etc.) to students, both internally and as they relate to other communications from Enrollment Management, Student Affairs and beyond.