**Berkeley City College**

**Student Services Program Review**

**Office of Financial Aid**

**Executive Summary**

The process of applying for Federal and State financial assistance in theory should be fairly easy for college students in general. However, the process is perceived confusing and complicated for many Berkeley City College (BCC) students who are from disadvantaged background and who are not familiar with vital information for Financial Aid application, e.g., filing income tax return on time.

To respond to the increase of students from disadvantaged background, BCC financial aid (FA) staffing also increased from 3.5 FTE to 4.5 FTE in spring 2010. The staffing increase has shortened the turn-around service time slightly.

To provide services to all BCC Financial Aid applicants so that they could receive financial support to continue their higher education in a timely fashion. The BCC FA office would like to request the following:

Human Resources: The office requests its staffing to be increased to 6 FTE from the current 4.5 FTE.

Office Space: The office needs a bigger and better designed of work location, filing system and to increase staffing to provide efficient services to the growing FA applicants.

Equipment: One additional monitor, two laptops, four small printers/printer supplies, replacement parts for the outdated scanner.

Hi Tech: Electronic Imaging: Using [computers](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/computer.html) and/or specialized hardware/software to [capture](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/capture.html) ([copy](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/copy.html)), [store](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/store.html), [process](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/process.html), manipulate, and distribute '[flat](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/flat.html) [information](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/information.html)' [documents](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/documents.html), (transcripts, Student Educational Plan (SEP), and educational supporting documentation) through [digitization](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/digitization.html).

**Program Review Narrative**

1. **Background Information**
2. Describe ( the unit, history, purposes and needs assessed, current components)

**Unit**

**Students are VIPs.** Berkeley City College Student Financial Services conducts its business per the philosophy that every single student who comes through our front door is a V.I.P. and we aim to treat each student in a respectful, caring, and efficient manner. Our service reflects the mission of the college, in that we are committed to our students’ success by providing those who meet federal, state, and institutional requirements the financial means to help defray their educational costs. By playing a vital role in our students’ retention and completion, we are likewise supporting our students’ transformation to becoming productive, valuable, contributing members of our rich, thriving, multi-cultural community.

**History**

**Operation challenge due to software changes**. The software used to generate disbursement checks was changed in fall 2008 from SAFE to Regent V Financial Services Management System. Unfortunately, the Regent software did not interface with our PeopleSoft software. This created numerous problems involving student disbursements for the 2008-2009 financial aid award year. Students did not receive disbursements on time, paid the incorrect amount, and many did not get disbursements until the semester had ended. Currently, our office is in the process of entering in the award amounts, units taken, and reconciling the disbursements amounts into the SAFE system for 2008-2009. This is a major undertaking and has required our staff to spend numerous hours on data entry and compiling data on over payments that students received for the 2008-2009. However, we are no longer using our new Regent V Financial Services Management System; we have implemented new web based systems.

**Purpose**

**Provide financial aid in a timely fashion to enable needy students receiving college education.** The process of receiving Federal and State financial assistance for the first time is fairly easy for most students because, as we pointed out earlier, we try our hardest to assist them as efficiently as possible. Our aim is always to get the funds into our students’ hands within the smallest possible time frame. It is the area of maintaining financial aid eligibility that, unfortunately, is problematic for many students due to their failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Strength of the Financial Aid Department is our separate behind-the-scene space devoted to processing our paperwork and handling the intricate details involved with obtaining our funds from the federal and state agencies and meeting our reporting requirements to these same funding sources. By being able to focus on the paperwork and data entry/receiving operations with no student interference/distractions, this part of our operation has become much more efficient, and less prone to errors than ever before. Being more efficient, we are better able to serve our V.I.P. students.

**Needs Assessed**

**Human Resources Needs: an increased staffing.** It is in the area of adequate staffing for our multi-million dollar operation that we come up short. We have 4.5 regular classified staff members which consist of 1 full-time Supervisor, 1 full-time Placement Assistant, 1.5 part-time Senior Clerical Assistant II, and 1.0 temporary Specialist to serve our quickly growing student population. We have four student workers who help with filing, making labels, shredding obsolete materials, photocopying, and other duties as assigned. This is not sufficient. Our two part-time classified positions need to be converted to two full-time positions in order to meet our current needs also we are in the process of hiring a Financial Aid Specialist. Adequate trained staff is critical to provide good service to our students, but also to limit financial liability to the institution. If administration of federal and state funds do not comply with regulations the institution may be required to pay financial penalties. Also staff stability is critical to the continued success of the office. Constant use of temporary staff creates additional training demands on limited permanent staff and takes time away from serving our students.

**Technology Needs: Electronic Imaging.**

**Equipment Needs: An up-to-date filing system.**

**Current Components**

**Offering online and in-person services.** Students are able to access their account via online through PeopleSoft system and to see exactly what their balance, what holds that place on their account and where to go to remove these holds. Their financial aid paper documents will be scanned, and then entered into our virtual space tracking environment. Instead of searching around the office for a missing Verification Worksheet, that form will be stored electronically to enable us to view it electronically and to eliminate missing or lost student paper work. Another welcomed change comes with the Higher Education Re-Authorization which the President signed into law just recently. Pell grants will increase over the course of the next several years. This means that our students who demonstrate financial need will be able to get additional funds to offset the increasing costs of books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. In addition, the student loan limit for unsubsidized loans was increased; the dependent student is able to borrow more money in 2009, the origination fees decreased, and all these changes make the Federal Stafford Loan resource more affordable for students. In short, our federal government has never been more responsive to the needs of our students enrolled in higher education, especially those students who lack the financial means to meet their college-related expenses. We look forward to assisting our students by informing them of the new provisions of the law and ensuring that they are able to take advantage of the new benefits being introduced.

We are providing as an addendum to this document statistics gathered from both the State Chancellor’s office and our own SAFE system which will show the number of students served and the amounts of funds disbursed since 2001. The funding sources include Board of Governors Fee Waivers (BOGFW), Pell Grants, Cal Grants, Campus-Based Aid, and Federal Stafford Loans. **(SEE Appendix A)**

1. Describe unique aspects of the program.

**1/3 of BCC student receives financial aid.** The unique aspects of the financial aid program are that one-third of Berkeley City College student receive financial aid in the form of the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver, Pell Grant, Cal Grant, Care, Chafee, SEOG, and ACG grants. Therefore, our services enable students to have access to a college education. That education comes in many forms, whether it is a vocational certificate, A.A degree, A.S. degree, and/or transferring to a four year university.

1. Describe your current resources.

Human Resources

We have:

 2 (1.5 FTE) permanent part-time classified Senior Clerical Assistant II,

1.0 FTE permanent full time Placement Assistant,

1.0 FTE Specialist (a permanent position with temporary staffing), and

1.0 FTE full-time Supervisor.

Equipment

We currently have:

8 PC computers,

1 laptop

1 scanner,

2 printers and

1 copier/fax machine.

 Filing equipment consists of four large sliding filing cabinets.

1. Describe your program goals and show how they are measured.

Our primary goals are to;

1. Increase the number of financial aid awards in proportion over all financial aid applicants,
2. Provide a fast and efficient service, and
3. Educate students on the different types of financial aid including but not limited to Pell Grants, BOGFW, Federal Stafford loans.

In order to fully achieve our objectives we would like to convert our two part-time 30 hour, 11 month, Senior Clerical Assistant II classified staff to full-time 40 hour, 12 month employees. In addition, we would like to have more full-time staff so we can implement financial aid informational workshops and individual appointments. We promote our program by doing financial aid presentations at our “feeder” high school and soon we will implement seeing students by appointment using our SARS system, this process will decrease student wait time. Our goals are measured based on the number of processed students and their satisfaction with our service.

TABLE 1.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| GOAL | HOW IS THE GOAL MEASURED(INDICATORS) | WHAT ARE EXPECTED OUTCOMES |
| Increase the number of financial aid awards | Total number of students awarded over all financial aid applicants | Increase in ratio of financial aid recipients over applicants  |
| Provide a fast and efficient service | Student files are processed in four to six weeks | Greater customer satisfaction |
| Educate students on financial aid matters | Total number of student attendance at workshops  | Higher student proficiency and a decrease in mistakes when filling out the FAFSA and Stafford loan packets |

1. How do you know that the program is meeting its goals

We strive to increase the number of financial aid awards and provide a fast and efficient service. The program has improved its performance on meeting its goals. However, it has not been able to provide its ideal service due to understaffing. The financial aid department has gained stability after having to deal with system and administrative changes. We now have a consistent and organized work flow that has allowed us to improve our service, especially in the areas of waiting time for processing and disbursement. Every week we have financial aid disbursements, which indicate that we are, undoubtedly, moving towards the right direction. In regards to our third goal, “educate students on financial aid matters”. We conduct Stafford loan workshops and have seen an increase in attendance from prior years. Students who attend the workshop are more successful in submitting their loan packets without errors and have a clearer understanding of the Federal Stafford loan process then student who do not attend the loan workshops. In addition, these students are more likely to fill out their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) error free because of the information they gain by attending the workshop.

1. What are the indicators that measure your present goals

As stated before, we measure our goals mainly by looking at the number of processed students. For fall 2009, we had a total of 656 processed students; currently we have 862 processed students. This suggests that by the end of the current semester we will have more processed students because we are continuously working on disbursing student awards. Take a look at the following data:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2007-2008 year | 2008-2009 year | Fall 2009 | Fall 2009 and Spring 2010,Unduplicated Counts (as of 03/05/10) |
| Number of students processed | 1155 | 956 | 656 | 862 |

|  |
| --- |
| **FINANCIAL AID UPDATE AS OF March 3, 2010****Spring 2010 Semester** |
| **Students enrolled and with FAFSA** | **Files evaluated** | **Incomplete Files** | **Disqualified Files** | **Completed and Paid** | **Files Left to be Evaluated** |
| 1899 | 1217 | 129 | 213 | 862 | 142 |

1. **Student Demographics of those using your services.**
2. Who do you serve?

Below is the most current data available on the Peralta Community College District website.

Peralta Community College District

**Student Demographics**
**Berkeley City College**

**Spring 2008**
**Financial Aid by Ethnicity**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total | Asian  | African Am | Filipino | Hisp/Lat | Native Am | Other  | White  |
| Non Fin. Aid | 3975 | 65% | 685 | 17% | 498 | 13%  | 68 | 2%  | 565 | 14% | 20 | 1%  | 619 | 16% | 1520 | 38% |
| Fin. Aid | **2179** | 35% | 302 | 14% | 747 | 34%  | 30 | 1%  | 290 | 13% | 19 | 1%  | 279 | 13% | 512 | 23% |
| Total Students | 6154 | 100% | 987 | 16% | 1245 | 20%  | 98 | 2%  | 855 | 14% | 39 | 1%  | 898 | 15% | 2032 | 33% |

Percentages in the total column are of total students. Category percentages are of row totals.
Figures for a term still in progress may be lower than for terms which have end-of-term data.

Peralta Community College District

**Student Demographics**
**Berkeley City College**

**Spring 2008**
**Financial Aid by Gender**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total | Male | Female | Unknown |
| Non Fin. Aid | 3975 | 65% | 1666 | 42% | 2290 | 58% | 19 | 0% |
| Fin. Aid | **2179** | 35% | 845 | 39% | 1324 | 61% | 10 | 0% |
| Total Students | 6154 | 100% | 2511 | 41% | 3614 | 59% | 29 | 0% |

Percentages in the total column are of total students. Category percentages are of row totals.
Figures for a term still in progress may be lower than for terms which have end-of-term data.

Peralta Community College District

**Student Demographics**
**Berkeley City College**

**Spring 2008**
**Financial Aid by Age**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total | Under 16 | 16-18  | 19-24  | 25-29  | 30-34  | 35-54  | 55-64  | Over 65 |
| Non Fin. Aid | 3975 | 65% | 53 | 1%  | 384 | 10% | 1388 | 35% | 578 | 15% | 361 | 9% | 814 | 20% | 273 | 7% | 123 | 3% |
| Fin. Aid | **2179** | 35% | 0 | 0%  | 117 | 5% | 801 | 37% | 433 | 20% | 185 | 8% | 515 | 24% | 95 | 4% | 33 | 2% |
| Total Students | 6154 | 100% | 53 | 1%  | 501 | 8% | 2189 | 36% | 1011 | 16% | 546 | 9% | 1329 | 22% | 368 | 6% | 156 | 3% |

Percentages in the total column are of total students. Category percentages are of row totals.
Figures for a term still in progress may be lower than for terms which have end-of-term data.

Peralta District, Institutional Research, March 6, 2010, URL: <http://209.129.196.100/indev/databank/bdemsrv.htm>

1. **Student Performance and Feedback**
2. How do students who receive services perform?
3. How do their counterparts who do not receive services perform?

**Success & Persistence Outcome Measures - All Students**
**Berkeley City College**

 **Spring 2008**
**Financial Aid**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All Enr  | SS Rt | Compl Rt | Avg GPA | Rtn Rt | Drp Rt | CD Enr\* | Perst Rt |
| Total College  | 6831  | 62.1 | 062.  | 2.97  | 70.9 | 29.1 | 6154  | 737.  |
| Non Fin. Aid  | 4418  | 64.8 | 65.1  | 3.06  | 70.5 | 29.5 | 3975  | 33.6  |
| Fin. Aid  | 2413  | 58.5 | 58.6  | 2.85  | 71.6 | 28.4 | **2179**  | 43.3  |

\*Census Date or later enrollment is the basis for persistence (# Persisted / CD Enr)
Rt = Rate

Peralta District, Institutional Research, March 6, 2010, URL:

http://209.129.196.100/cgi-bin/indev/ss1htm.cgi?cmp=v&trm=s08&FAID=checkbox&flt=T&Submit=Submit&txt=H

1. What do student have to say about student services?

With the increase in staffing, the Berkeley City College Financial Aid Office (FAO) plans to conduct a student survey to collect feedback about our services. Meanwhile, based on the verbal feedback thus far students don’t feel completely satisfied, and usually express their disappointment by consistently coming back to the front counter, talking among themselves, and even posting their frustration on the College’s social networking page, Facebook.

1. Have you used statewide or national assessment instruments to assess your programs?

The office uses financial aid related data and reports as comparisons to improve our services. For example, data and reports include Board Financial Assistance Program (BFAP) and Common Origination & Disbursement (COD) weekly and annual reports are used to reconcile monies received from state and federal agencies. In addition, the special report entitled “Green Lights and Red Tape”, published by The Institute for College Access and Success.

**IV. Program Effectiveness**

1. Interdepartmental /Program/Campus Collaboration
2. Please provide a list of memberships in standing committees and governance groups.

Financial Aid Supervisor - Bookstore Committee

 Student Services Council

 Various Hiring Committees

Dean of Student Service- Student Services Council

 Various Hiring Committees

 Leadership Council

 Bookstore Committee

 Project Integration Team (PIT)

 Health Services Committee

 Department Chairs Committee

 Roundtable

 EOPS Board Committee

 Peralta Vice Presidents and Deans Committee

 Associated Students

 Financial Aid Appeals Committee.

1. How does the units (and committees in which unit participates) support other administrative, student services and academic units in the college?

The Financial Aid department At Berkeley city college supports other departments’ programs by providing, and even placing student workers when needed.

Under the Dean of Student Services, the Dean works with the Financial Aid Office to collaborate on decision making with Academic Dismissal Appeals and the Federal Stafford Loan Certificate Approval. In addition, the Secretary to the Dean assists the Financial Aid Office with purchasing supplies and acts as a liaison between students who have experienced problems receiving their financial aid and the Dean Student Services.

The counseling unit supports students who need specific forms filled out by an academic counselor to aid in their financial aid. Counselors evaluate student’s transcripts who have attended colleges outside of the Peralta District to determine the total amount of units that are transferable towards their current educational goal. In addition, counselors develop Student Educational Plans (SEP) for students who are on academic dismissal. The SEP is an important component for students who are on academic dismissal because it outlines future semesters and classes so that they are set up for success in achieving good grades. Lastly, counselors are able to determine if students do not have a high school diploma or GED but have taken at least six degree applicable units that demonstrate the student’s qualification for financial aid.

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and Financial Aid work closely together to provide EOPS students with specific funds for child care and transportation (CARE and EOPS Grants). EOPS students are first generation college students that may need additional financial aid support in order successfully in obtain their educational goals.

Admissions and Records functions are essential in record keeping of student’s high school graduation information and the confirmation of California State residency. This information is a key component in the processing of student’s Board of Governor’s Fee Waivers (BOGFW) which is only for instate residents. High school information is a vital factor in the verification of student’s eligibility to receive financial aid.

Assessment and Orientation is an important unit that ensures that student who do not have a high school diploma or GED are able to take the Ability-To-Benefit (ATB) test. Students who pass the ATB test demonstrate that they have at least a 12th grade level in English and math and will benefit by attending college. A weekly ATB report is generated by Assessment and Orientation and given to the Financial Aid Office for recordkeeping.

The Financial Aid Office serves the better good of the entire college. Because our office serves one-third of the student population we have a direct impact on the success of students and their contribution to the college. By providing financial aid assistance to student who would not be able to afford college classes on their own, we enable the students to continue to pursue their education goals.

1. If your program does have an impact on other programs/dept/service, please describe the nature of the relationship with the program/dept/service and the effectiveness of the relationship.

Financial Aid works as the instrument that aids the EOPS department to verify their students are eligible; in addition to that our department disburses funds from our common shared budget. In the same way, the financial aid department relies on counseling, and Admissions and Records on the process of paying and educating students. Counseling is an integral unit that supports several student components in the financial aid process. Counseling provides a great deal of support to students who are applying for financial aid. Cooperative participation and effective communication among departments within Student Services will ensure quality service to our students.

1. Quantity of program/dept/service delivered (student utilization of services and student engagement).
2. How many students do you serve?

1899 students for the 2009-2010 academic year.

1. How many appointments do you have on any given day?

 We currently see a limited number of students on a request basis.

1. How many contacts do you make with students?

For the spring 2010 semester approximately 1153 students have visited the front counter. In general, about 100 students visit the front counter on a daily basis. On a daily basis the office as a whole, sends about 155 emails and about 25 students are contacted by phone.

1. **Student Learning Outcomes**
2. List the students learning outcomes that are presently being assessed. Describe the activities that will or have been implemented to achieve the SLOs.

Demonstrate knowledge of the FAFSA application process.

This is measured by reports produced by the district IT Department at the end of the academic year that tracks the total number of correction updates made by the financial aid office on student FAFSA’s.

Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to current year Financial Aid Handbook.

This is measured by actual number of students who appeal due to not meeting SAP during the academic year.

Clearly understand eligibility for the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver (BOGFW).

This is measured by the total number of students who apply for and are eligible for the BOGFW.

1. What additional student learning outcomes should be considered to demonstrate what your student should know and/or be able to do as consequence of the service provided by your unit?

Demonstrate the utilization and navigation of the financial aid website to access forms and information.

Recognize and understand the process and procedures of the financial aid office.

1. **Action Plan: Using the results of the data collected and discussed in the self-study, identify:**
2. The future needs of the program.

Even though we have managed to better our service, in order to ultimately reach our goals, we need:

* Accruing sophisticated electronic imaging equipment to eliminate lost paperwork and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the staff. The benefits of supplying the front counter with a scanner for each work station will eliminate student and staff frustration with missing and misfiled documents because the financial aid staff will be able to electronically access student information from their workstations when reviewing files.
* More staff to process all paper work, assist students, enables the department to actively interact with other departments and to provide informational workshops.
* Physical space: due to the heavy work load our department has, it relies on several people to be completely and efficiently functional. Among those people we needs specialists, clericals and students workers.
* New filing equipment is required in order to establish a more efficient, accessible, and secure environment for student files as well as meet state and federal legislative laws.
* Increase in program funding such as Board Financial Assistance Program (BFAP) in order to increase our resources.
1. The future goals and methods of assessment of the program, including students learning outcomes
* Decrease the number of adverse audit findings by implementing policies and procedures for processing of student financial aid files in accordance with Peralta District policies.
* Create an outreach program by offering financial aid workshops to increase the awareness of eligibility for financial aid in order to increase the amount of recipients who receive the BOGFW and Pell Grants.
* Develop survey to assess the effectiveness of financial aid programs
* An increase in staff is needed. Specifically a full-time Financial Aid Specialist and an additional Senior Clerical Assistant II. Ultimately, we would like the two part-time Senior Clerical Assistants II positions to be increase from 30 hours a week to 40 hours a week.
* Implementation of a financial aid appointment system to facilitate faster completion of student files which would result in quicker disbursements for students.
* Increase financial aid recipients.
1. The strategies and actions to be taken by the unit over the next six years to strengthen the program and meet the strategic goals of the program and college.
* Increase in staffing.
* Increase in financial aid recipients.
* Online loan processing.
* Develop off campus job availability for financial aid recipients.
* Develop and publish on the financial aid website a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ’s) page.
1. The support needed by the unit in order to address issues resulting from the self-study.
* Institutional Effective Coordinator to develop surveys and compile results.
* IT department to develop and publish online student survey.
* College administrative support.
* Financial support.

The Financial Aid Department needs to develop new strategies for handling the large increase in the number of students attending BCC. The following is an action plan to try to address the challenges faced by the department.

BCC Student Financial Services is a three-part operation: we provide front counter information and intake services; we have a “behind the scene” processing center and we assist with outreach and recruitment by doing financial aid presentations at our “feeder” high school. We also provide in-depth Loan Entrance Interviews to the students in our college who wish to borrow through the Federal Stafford Loan program.

Since it is at the front counter that most students are introduced to us and our services, it is of vital importance that we make a good first impression. We do this by treating each student as an individual and not as a number. We help match students with various internal and external scholarship resources.

Our financial services operations center is a welcomed addition and was created when we received our new designated space at the college. It is in our operations that we communicate weekly with the Pell Grant Processing Center to report funds disbursed and to request additional funds; we also use this area to certify Federal Stafford Loans, work on lengthy federal and state reports, and communicate with students via US mail, e-mail, and phone calls.

The third part of our operation, financial aid presentations, began some years ago when we first sent out a team representing all aspects of student services to our local high schools. Each team member would discuss a particular facet of student services, and we were well received by the high school students and their administrator. Since that time we now use our Student Ambassadors to go to our “feeder” high schools on a regular basis to discuss the benefits of community college education, and particularly why Berkeley City College might be the best choice for some students.

In previous years, representatives from the various banks who provide our students with the Federal Stafford Loans conducted the mandatory Loan Entrance and Loan Exit Interviews. We decided that we would conduct the Loan Entrance sessions ourselves and ask the lenders to assist with the Loan Exit sessions only. In doing this we are able to provide our students with better services in this area.

We are planning to implement appointments for students using our SARS system in the spring 2010 semester; this process will significantly reduce student wait time and make financial aid more efficiency.

Appendix A