Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of Student Financial Aid is to provide information about and access to federal, state, institutional and private resources that students and parents need to finance education by ensuring quality service to students, parents, the campus community and outside entities in an accurate, efficient, and timely manner. Services and activities are conducted in compliance with federal and state regulatory and institutional policy requirements.

Planning Goals

The three goals below relate directly to the University’s mission to attract, retain and graduate a highly diverse student body.

Goal 1: Help students to be knowledgeable about and have access to self-services available to navigate through the financial aid processes

Goal 2: Assure that students and parents can find and have access to critical information about deadlines, requirements, rights and responsibilities pertaining to financial aid

Goal 3: Provide Financial Aid Counselors with ready access to current regulations, policies and procedures, enabling them to advise students and parents and to review applications, supporting documents, and petitions in a competent, accurate, and consistent manner.

Student Learning Outcomes and Program Objectives

Student Learning Outcome #1

For 2009-10, financial aid students will view and accept their award offers and will check their financial aid status online using MyFinaid. The number of follow-up emails sent to students who have not responded to requests for information will be reduced by 25%. The percentage of students who have not accepted their award offers, or who have not resolved disbursement holds will be reduced by 10%.

Rationale:
As we increase our use of email and internet to communicate with students, we need to ensure that they are receiving the information and that they understand how to respond.

Measures:
Percentage of students who respond to their offer notifications will be collected at one week intervals after the notification emails are sent to see the how long from email send date to student action completed. The response rate from 2009-10 launch year will be compared to the 2nd year, 2010-11. The percentage of students who require follow up due to lack of response for each year will also be compared.

Results:
It was unrealistic to determine a comparable response rate from one year to the next. We will rethink some kind of an assessment tool for the success of our automated award offer on the portal.

Student Learning Outcome #2:
For 2009-10, the number of students who are informed about financial aid disbursement holds will be increased by 20% so that they can respond prior to important university deadlines pertaining to fee payment and refund applications.

Rationale:
Students with financial aid disbursement holds must resolve the issues before financial aid funds can be released to pay registration fees and other obligations. If financial aid funds are not released or released after important Bursar deadlines, students may face out-of-pocket expenses that cannot be covered by financial aid and/or non-passing grades.

Measures:
In coordination with the Bursar’s Office, the number of financial aid students being charged late fees in Fall 2009 because they have missed the fee payment deadline will be compared to Fall 2008. In coordination with the Registrar’s Office, the number of financial aid students missing the date to drop classes (and being required to pay registration fees without benefit of fin aid) in Fall 2009 will be compared to Fall 2008.

Results:
Our communication efforts may have helped. Fewer students in Spring 2010 were charged a late fee for late payment of fees. In Spring 2010, the number was 1075; in Spring 2009, the number was 1385. We can take a portion of the credit for that reduction.

Program Objective #1:
During 2009-10, Financial Aid policies and procedures will be posted and updated on the web (iLearn) so that counselors have access to the information both at their desks and at the One Stop. Staff will be evaluated about knowledge of the policies and procedures before they are posted on the web, and then again after the policies are available on the web.

Rationale:
The financial aid processes and regulations are complex and continually changing. Counselors need to be knowledgeable in all aspects of the processes and must be current with the changes to policies and procedures in order to provide accurate information to students and parents who contact our office and to review financial aid applications and supporting documents consistently and accurately.

Measures:
Staff will be tested before and after the updates are posted.

Results:
The pre test back in 2009 indicated our lack of specific knowledge about financial aid programs and limited access to the answers (usually in some email that was not readily available to staff when speaking with students and parents in person or on the phone). Since then, we have all been diligent in putting key bits of information about our programs, that all staff should be able to answer for students, in iLearn. The post-test results -- 99% accuracy. We will continue to use iLearn as a key means to communicate procedures, updates, and other vital information about the complex financial aid programs.