

Student Services Program Review 2019/20 UPDATE

Financial Aid

**Created on: 07/30/2019 04:36:00 PM PDT
Last Modified: 01/27/2020 04:16:38 PM PDT**

Table of Contents

General Information	1
2019/20 Student Services Program Review	2
Submission Information and Updates (REQUIRED)	2
Outcomes and Assessment (REQUIRED)	3
Program Analysis for Equity and Excellence (REQUIRED)	3
Program Goals (REQUIRED)	3
Action Plans for Goals (REQUIRED)	3
Goal Status Report (REQUIRED)	5
Request Forms	9
Classified Position, BARC and Faculty Position Request	9
Reviewers	10
Liaison's Review	10
Manager's Review	10
Appendix	11

General Information (Student Services Program Review 2019/20 UPDATE)

2019/20 Student Services Program Review

SUBMISSION INFORMATION AND UPDATES (REQUIRED)

- Name of Lead Writers - CathySprings, Brianna Garcia
- Name of Liaison - Leticia Diaz
- Department Chair - (Financial Aid Officer) - Gilda Maldonado
- Name of Manager/Service Area Supervisor - Victoria Miller

Staff Updates: The Financial Aid Office currently has 11 contract staff and 2 NANCE employees. Losses include Emmanouil Powel SCA, who obtained a job at the District Office as an Assistant Systems Analyst for Financial Aid and Alexander Tanon an experienced NANCE. Lilibeth Rodriguez SAT, was working primarily as People Soft Cal Grant liaison at the District 4 days a week, however, as of January she is now a Systems Analyst full time at the District Office. Kesia Williams has resigned as of February 7, 2020 due to obtaining a position at SDSU. Brianna Garcia, a former FA Office NANCE, was hired to fill the vacant SSA position.

Strengths: A full-time return of Gilda Maldonado, FAO to the office has helped tremendously with problem solving, personnel and workload issues.

A new Work Study procedure has been implemented which awards eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis who have indicated they are interested in the program and contact the office. This adjustment has sped up the process of placing those students who are actually interested in Work Study as opposed to the lengthy process of awarding, communicating with and tracking students who are not actually interested.

Our newest SSA, Brianna Garcia, is stepping up to many new challenges by serving as Dreamers Liaison with EOPS and offering Dreamer workshops, working on SLO statistics as a co-lead writer in training on PR and becoming a part of numerous campus committees, and participating in LEEP (Leaders Engaging in Equity Practice).

The FA Office continues to strengthen relationships with the Accounting Office staff for problem-solving and effective disbursement and tracking of student funding. The District decision not to drop students for non-payment was an enormous help to both students and the other offices involved.

But our greatest strength has been the perseverance of FA Office staff itself in the face of extremely challenging system issues, staff absences, regular, mental and physical fatigue, low morale and the uncertainty of programming and procedural progress.

Challenges: The primary ongoing challenge to the Office is People Soft which has problematic issues too numerous to detail, but in the past year over 3,000 "tickets" identifying problems have been submitted to District IT requesting assistance with specific issues. The majority of general staff issues revolve around determining procedures, ascertaining accuracy of processed information, trouble-shooting and correcting problems which have resulted in student overpayment, underpayments, delayed payment, reconciliation difficulties and reporting issues to name but a few. Processing aid and trouble-shooting previously took 1-2 screens and a few minutes to identify. The same procedure now takes a minimum of 15-20 minutes often with several staff members navigating through multiple pages seeking information. It was recently discovered that despite the fact that the Department of Education has a target range of 30% of students for verification, Mesa's percentage was an enormous 62%.

The absence of successful direct deposit programming has caused a significant increase in lost checks and warrant cancellations due to students having incorrect address on the student portal or not picking up checks sent to Accounting. Each issue requires time-consuming staff hours to complete collaborative research, correction, student communication and resolution. This has a negative trickle-down effect on all student interaction including individual wait time at the counter, on the phones and general resolution of student funding issues.

Understaffing and a lack of available space to expand remain a constant concern. The Office has already lost several staff members to relocation within the District, and has recently had 1 resignation. It is also anticipated that 2 staff will be lost to

retirement during or shortly after the Spring 2020 Semester.

OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT (REQUIRED)

Form: 2019/20 Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Section (See appendix)

PROGRAM ANALYSIS FOR EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE (REQUIRED)

Form: 2019/20 Program Review Student Services Program Analysis Section (See appendix)

PROGRAM GOALS (REQUIRED)

Financial aid 2018/19

Student Aid Workshops

Provide a series of financial aid workshops on topics related to new program changes; updates on federal and state regulations; understanding the appeal process.

Mapping

CA- Mesa College Strategic Directions and Goals: Strategic Goal 1.2, Strategic Goal 1.4, Strategic Goal 6.3,
Institutional Learning Outcomes 2016/17: Communication, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy

Student Appeals

Review, assess and enhance as appropriate the financial aid appeal process and associated literature.

Mapping

CA- Mesa College Strategic Directions and Goals: Strategic Goal 1.2, Strategic Goal 1.4, Strategic Goal 2.4,
Strategic Goal 6.2, Strategic Goal 6.3,
Institutional Learning Outcomes 2016/17: Communication, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy

Web Page Updates

Up-date the financial aid web page with the latest and most accurate information available.

Mapping

CA- Mesa College Strategic Directions and Goals: Strategic Goal 1.2, Strategic Goal 1.4, Strategic Goal 1.5,
Strategic Goal 2.4, Strategic Goal 4.4, Strategic Goal 6.3,
Institutional Learning Outcomes 2016/17: Communication, Critical Thinking, Information Literacy

ACTION PLANS FOR GOALS (REQUIRED)

Actions

Financial aid 2018/19

Goal

Goal: Student Aid Workshops

Provide a series of financial aid workshops on topics related to new program changes; updates on federal and state regulations; understanding the appeal process.

Action: Student Aid Workshops

Describe the actions needed to achieve this objective:	Information on regulatory and program changes critical for successful student aid applications will be determined and incorporated into workshops scheduled on and off campus throughout the year.
Who will be responsible for overseeing the completion of this objective:	The Financial Aid Officer and Supervisor will schedule and appropriately staff each event.
Provide a timeline for the actions:	Ongoing throughout the year.
Describe the assessment plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective:	Attendance numbers of current and potential students and parents.
List resources needed to achieve this objective and associated costs (Supplies, Equipment, Computer Equipment, Travel & Conference, Software, Facilities, Classified Staff, Faculty, Other):	Classified Staff and workshop appropriate or government publications

Goal: Student Appeals

Review, assess and enhance as appropriate the financial aid appeal process and associated literature.

Action: Student Appeals

Describe the actions needed to achieve this objective:	Student Academic Progress (SAP) regulations and policies will be reviewed each year for updates or changes. Appeal forms and any other printed materials on the Appeal process including workshop presentations and web pages, will be appropriately modified.
Who will be responsible for overseeing the completion of this objective:	The Financial Aid Officer, Supervisor and Senior Student Services Assistant primarily responsible for Appeal workshops and web page updates.
Provide a timeline for the actions:	Throughout the year as needed, but specifically before notification to students of their SAP status at the end of the Spring semester.
Describe the assessment	Statistics are kept and analysed yearly on the number of appeal submissions,

plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective: approvals, denials and the reasons for denials.

List resources needed to achieve this objective and associated costs (Supplies, Equipment, Computer Equipment, Travel & Conference, Software, Facilities, Classified Staff, Faculty, Other): Classified Staff

Goal: Web Page Updates

Up-date the financial aid web page with the latest and most accurate information available.

Action: Web Page Updates

Describe the actions needed to achieve this objective: Yearly changes in regulations, policies , forms, links and language will be updated as needed to the most accurate information available.

Who will be responsible for overseeing the completion of this objective: The Financial Aid Officer, Supervisor and all Classified Staff provide input on language, information and links provided online. The Senior Student Services Assistant identifies and submits the required changes and updates.

Provide a timeline for the actions: This process occurs year-round.

Describe the assessment plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective: Staff, student and parental feedback.

List resources needed to achieve this objective and associated costs (Supplies, Equipment, Computer Equipment, Travel & Conference, Software, Facilities, Classified Staff, Faculty, Other): Classified Staff

GOAL STATUS REPORT (REQUIRED)

Action Statuses

Financial aid 2018/19

Goal

Goal: Student Aid Workshops

Provide a series of financial aid workshops on topics related to new program changes; updates on federal and state regulations; understanding the appeal process.

Action: Student Aid Workshops

Describe the actions needed to achieve this objective:	Information on regulatory and program changes critical for successful student aid applications will be determined and incorporated into workshops scheduled on and off campus throughout the year.
Who will be responsible for overseeing the completion of this objective:	The Financial Aid Officer and Supervisor will schedule and appropriately staff each event.
Provide a timeline for the actions:	Ongoing throughout the year.
Describe the assessment plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective:	Attendance numbers of current and potential students and parents.
List resources needed to achieve this objective and associated costs (Supplies, Equipment, Computer Equipment, Travel & Conference, Software, Facilities, Classified Staff, Faculty, Other):	Classified Staff and workshop appropriate or government publications

Status for Student Aid Workshops

Current Status:	In Progress
If the Current Status was marked Completed, what was the impact of the completed objective on your program:	
If the Current Status was not marked Completed, what are the implications and next steps:	General Student Aid Workshops have been increased with additional hands-on CA Dream Act application workshops offered 5 times each semester.

Goal: Student Appeals

Review, assess and enhance as appropriate the financial aid appeal process and associated literature.

Action: Student Appeals

Describe the actions needed to achieve this objective:

Student Academic Progress (SAP) regulations and policies will be reviewed each year for updates or changes. Appeal forms and any other printed materials on the Appeal process including workshop presentations and web pages, will be appropriately modified.

Who will be responsible for overseeing the completion of this objective:

The Financial Aid Officer, Supervisor and Senior Student Services Assistant primarily responsible for Appeal workshops and web page updates.

Provide a timeline for the actions:

Throughout the year as needed, but specifically before notification to students of their SAP status at the end of the Spring semester.

Describe the assessment plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective:

Statistics are kept and analysed yearly on the number of appeal submissions, approvals, denials and the reasons for denials.

List resources needed to achieve this objective and associated costs (Supplies, Equipment, Computer Equipment, Travel & Conference, Software, Facilities, Classified Staff, Faculty, Other):

Classified Staff

Status for Student Appeals

Current Status:

In Progress

If the Current Status was marked Completed, what was the impact of the completed objective on your program:

If the Current Status was not marked Completed, what are the implications and next steps:

Review of the Appeal process and literature is an ongoing objective as Federal and District policies and regulations are altered. The number of Appeal workshops have been increased to every other week throughout the Appeal window in each semester.

Goal: Web Page Updates

Up-date the financial aid web page with the latest and most accurate information available.

Action: Web Page Updates

Describe the actions needed to achieve this objective:

Yearly changes in regulations, policies , forms, links and language will be updated as needed to the most accurate information available.

Who will be responsible for overseeing the completion of this objective:	The Financial Aid Officer, Supervisor and all Classified Staff provide input on language, information and links provided online. The Senior Student Services Assistant identifies and submits the required changes and updates.
Provide a timeline for the actions:	This process occurs year-round.
Describe the assessment plan you will use to know if the objective was achieved and effective:	Staff, student and parental feedback.
List resources needed to achieve this objective and associated costs (Supplies, Equipment, Computer Equipment, Travel & Conference, Software, Facilities, Classified Staff, Faculty, Other):	Classified Staff

Status for Web Page Updates

Current Status:	In Progress
If the Current Status was marked Completed, what was the impact of the completed objective on your program:	
If the Current Status was not marked Completed, what are the implications and next steps:	The process to update the web pages is ongoing with the addition of new forms, instructions and information each semester and as needed throughout the year.

Request Forms

CLASSIFIED POSITION, BARC AND FACULTY POSITION REQUEST

Reviewers

LIAISON'S REVIEW

Form: Student Services Program Liaison's Review 2019/20 UPDATE

MANAGER'S REVIEW

Form: Student Services Program Manager's Review 2019/20 UPDATE

Appendix

-
- A. **2019/20 Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Section** (Form)
 - B. **2019/20 Program Review Student Services Program Analysis Section** (Form)
-

Form: "2019/20 Program Review Outcomes and Assessment Section"

Created with : Taskstream

Participating Area: Financial Aid

(REQUIRED) Program name

Financial Aid

(REQUIRED) Are you on target with your assessment schedule?

1. Students will learn to analyze, describe and explain issues related to their lack of academic progress.

The assessment schedule for this SLO is on-going and on target, continuing on a weekly basis as appeal decisions are logged after each appeal committee meeting. Appeal workshop and their effect on approval rates is maintained by each semester.

2. Students will successfully complete their Financial Aid file.

The assessment schedule for this SLO is also on-going and on target as statistics on numbers of aid applications and awarding are continually monitored throughout the year.

(REQUIRED) What have your assessments revealed about your courses/programs/service area/school/division/office?

1. For the 2018/19 aid year approximately 3890 students were disqualified for aid based on their lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). A total of 412 students submitted appeals with an approval rate of 41% which falls within the general pattern of 40 - 43% approval rate over the previous 4 years. There is a continuing trend of decline in the numbers of students submitting appeals ranging from 712 to 616 in the previous 4 years, and now down to 412.

The number of students attending appeal workshops has increased slightly to 132, however, only 20 of those students submitted appeals in the 2018/19 aid year. The approval rate for those students who attended was 51% which is slightly higher than the general average. This is an indication that attending an appeal workshop is still having a positive effect on those students who choose to submit. Pre and post workshop surveys completed in each semester still indicate that students have a greater understanding of how to determine whether or not they are in required units (70-81%) as opposed to what an extenuating circumstance is (55 -69%).

The fluctuating number of appeals submitted could represent various elements such as changes in District or Federal SAP policies and standards; continual tightening of requirements regarding documentation; student realization that they do not have documentable extenuating circumstances for poor progress. Anecdotally students have

indicated that they are concerned about lifetime Pell eligibility and plan to save it for transfer so choose not to appeal, or they are interested only in a fee waiver.

2. In the first year of implementation of People Soft the number of Pell grants awarded for 2018/19 was 5152, just slightly fewer students than in previous aid years. Fee waivers (CCPG) waived a total of \$21,114,968 in student fees. Cal Grant B awarded increased to 1299 with the number of students meeting qualifications for payment at 876. Cal Grant C awarded 137 students, but only 35 met the criteria for payment. Of the students in the BA program at Mesa, 1 qualified and was paid Cal Grant.

The Department of Ed has a target range of 30% of students selected for verification by turning in additional supporting documents and tax transcripts, but in a year of already challenging system issues, Mesa's percentage reached 62. In a year of extraordinary system and governmental challenges, award numbers have only dropped slightly, remaining predominately stable. Students have been able to navigate the new system even with the additional burden of an increased number of them selected for verification.

(REQUIRED) Based on your assessments, what resource needs have you identified?

More classified staff professionals are needed to process files and appeals and to deal with increased system complexities and issues. Increased numbers of workshop presentations for application completion and successful appeal submission require additional personnel.

Please provide any other comments.

No answer specified

Form: "2019/20 Program Review Student Services Program Analysis Section"

Created with : Taskstream

Participating Area: Financial Aid

Program Name

(REQUIRED) Type your program/ service area name.

Financial Aid

Part A: In this section, please analyze your program/service area in terms of one metric of student success. Start by disaggregating the available data by race, gender, and any other parameters of interest for the metric and answer the following questions.

(REQUIRED) A1. What patterns do you notice with regard to equity at the program level or specific service level by race/ethnicity?

Equity Gap: When a group of students who share a common characteristic (e.g. race/ethnicity) have lower access and/or outcome rates than their peers. The size of the equity gap along with the size of the group determine whether that gap is significant. Larger groups should, statistically, have smaller gaps and therefore when gaps are present (even small ones) they may be significant. Smaller groups will see wider variation in outcomes, therefore gaps should be seen consistently over time and/or reviewed by looking at multiple years in aggregate to determine if they are significant.

Equity: The quality of being fair and impartial applies to the basic tenets of Federal and State Financial Aid which are need-based programs with no consideration of ethnicity or gender. The FAFSA or CA Dream Act does not require disclosure of race or ethnicity information and the Financial Aid office is prohibited from considering such when processing and awarding. As stated in the Office Mission Statement: Mesa College's Financial Aid Office believes that no individual should deprive himself/herself from fulfilling their education goal due to financial barriers. It is our mission to provide adequate financial assistance to all eligible students through the coordination and utilization of all resources available to students who meet the program(s) eligibility requirements.

Clearly the issue of Equity applies to income inequality as well as specific cohorts of historically under represented students such as former Foster Youth, homeless students, Veterans, students with disabilities or formerly incarcerated students to name but a few.

By Federal Financial Aid formula, aid goes to the students with the most need. Achieving that funding equity does not exist in a vacuum and includes the need for effective communication and an early response to issues of language barriers within information dissemination. The Mesa FA Office approach to communication with students includes providing literature, content and contact in multiple written and spoken languages. When the FA Office is unable to effectively communicate due to a language barrier, help is sought from staff in other offices with the appropriate language skills.

The FA Office strives to exhibit, within governmental guidelines and regulations, cultural sensitivity when dealing with all students and parents in approaching equity concerns. Increasingly, understanding the general and specific cultural issues as they apply to the current shifting governmental attitudes toward immigrant communities is essential in effectively serving that particular student population. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a number of students who might have applied for aid are not, or are asking for aid to be removed for fear that accepting government help may harm or alter their immigration status. The Financial Aid office staff was participant and presenters at the Basic Needs Summit held on campus on 7/29/2019.

(REQUIRED) A2. Do these patterns persist over time (e.g., look at the last five years)? Describe if equity gaps are increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?

Equity gaps are constantly increasing for California Community College students. The disparity between increases in income and the rising cost of living in San Diego paired with the lack of additional funding to supplement aid creates stress and burden for students. Financial aid staff are also left with few options to help students in financial distress.

The California Dream Act allows undocumented and non-resident students (US Citizens and eligible non-citizens) who qualify for a non-resident exemption (AB540) to receive in-state tuition at any public college as well as certain types of financial aid, but makes no provision for not making the March 2nd deadlines.

The number of Mesa Dream Act students paid Cal Grant was 42 in 2014/15 and proceeded to increase in the next 2 subsequent aid years (47 in 2015/16, 60 in 2016/17). A decline occurred in 2017/18 with 56 students receiving awards and dropped to only 40 in 2018/19. Fee waivers are the most numerous awards for Dream Act students.

Dream Act Applications have increased to 211 so far in the 19/20 aid year, with 37 students paid.

Pell grants have remained stable at just under 5400 students per year with a slight dip to 5146 students in 2017/18. Challenges with the new system may have been responsible for a decrease to 4305 in the 2018/19 aid year.

(REQUIRED) A3. What factors might have influenced these results? What are your most significant findings?

Lower overall college enrollment levels, political climate affecting students with potential immigration status issues, increase in family income due to positive economic situations are all factors which may influence statistics regarding aid awarded. A decrease in disposable income due to the rising cost of living may have also contributed to the numbers of students considering college as an option.

(REQUIRED) A4. How have you/might you alter practices to increase student success and reduce equity gaps?

The Financial Aid Office is tasked with helping to lessen the achievement gap due to income inequality, providing help to students who might not otherwise attend college. California is currently ranked 30 nationally in aid application completion. It has been shown that with college degrees, Americans can be paid up to 74% more than those with only high school diplomas.

In the State of California there are currently 8 proposed bills for moving Educational Justice and Equity Funding forward in 2019. AB 1617, to be voted on in January 2020, makes completion of a financial aid application a component of the graduation process. Completing a FAFSA application would be mandatory for High School students. When Val Verde Unified School District made completing a FAFSA a graduation requirement for 2017, in the first year completion rate went from 69% to 83%.

Students can't receive aid if they don't apply. Encouraging all students to apply for aid regardless of whether or not they think they would be eligible continues to be a priority to the Financial Aid Office. Workshops, language specific publications, limited time frame to get by with only completing a paper fee waiver application (thereby encouraging FAFSA/Dream Act completion), High School visits, Campus events are all approaches to encouraging students to apply. Where there are specific, sudden or unavoidable financial difficulties students are referred to the Equity office or the Dean of Student Affairs for possible assistance.

California has the majority of DACA students with one quarter of the national total. 70,000 are enrolled in California Community Colleges and all colleges are encouraged to create 'Dreamer Resource Centers and hold 'Know Your Rights' clinics. A series of Financial Aid workshops in completing the FAFSA and Dream Act at Mesa are held in Spanish to inform students and parents on how to apply and also how to maintain their aid. Workshops specifically for Dreamers are offered for hands-on application completion. Prospective students are assured that they are able to apply even if their parents are undocumented or foreign citizens. The climate both on Campus and throughout the District affirms the policy that protects 'the rights of everyone within the nation, no matter what their citizenship or visa status might be' and students are appraised of this philosophy when they indicate reluctance in providing information needed to help them obtain funding.

The Financial Aid Office at Mesa hosts an Information Fair twice a year to make sure students are aware of the potential services obtainable on campus: Transfer, Health, Outreach, Veterans, Tutoring, Counseling, EOPS, STAR, Borderless Scholars, Student Affairs, Clubs and Student Government are but a few of the participating areas. Our prime first floor location is perfect for posting information from other offices on their relevant activities and services such as the 'Know Your Rights' information sessions, Career and Job Fairs, Scholarship search information and welcoming literature for Dreamers. Working in conjunction with EOPS, Outreach, Borderless Scholars, Puente and Cruise the FA Office has planned multiple hands-on CA Dream Act Application Workshops where students and their parents can receive assistance in completing the application. The District published 'Dreamer Support Program Newsletter' has financial aid information regarding availability of state aid regardless of federal changes to 'public charge' policy as well as links to further information and resources.

(REQUIRED) A5. How does your program contribute to the College's identity of being a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)?

The Financial Aid Office encourages and processes Dream Act applications for students confirmed to be AB540 students. The Dream Act can offer in-state tuition assistance with possible fee waivers and/or Cal Grants for eligible students. This program helps students who might otherwise be unable to attend college. Currently Dreamer data is not disaggregated by the District to avoid any increased risk to Dreamer identity.

(REQUIRED) A6. Have you identified resource needs?

Additional resource needs would be in the area of additional staff and space to put those staff members. Multi-lingual capabilities would be ideal for presentations and effective counter communication. Anecdotally, based on students attending workshops, Spanish and Vietnamese have been the predominate language preference for those students unable to complete a FAFSA.

(REQUIRED) A7. Do any of your program goals address these implications or needs? If not, please develop a new goal that addresses your findings and subsequent reflection.

All of the Financial Aid Office program goals concern aspects of communicating the latest information to students through various means: workshops, web pages and the appeal process practice and literature. Accurate and timely communication is the primary means of encouraging students to apply for aid and increase their chance of removing financial barriers thereby increasing their chances of obtaining an equitable education. Workshops for CA Dream applications and Appeals have been increased in number and this information has been updated on the web pages and appeal forms.

Part B: In this section, look at the area of focus you identified in last year's program review and answer the following questions.

(REQUIRED) B1. How have you developed this focus? Are you seeing any results? What are your next steps?

The overwhelming area of focus has been and will continue to be the implementation of the conversion to People Soft in order to meet the basic office mission of awarding aid to financially at-risk students. Program discoveries continue to affect procedures and problem solving within the office. As People Soft evolves and laws and regulations shift, staff adjusts procedures appropriately and continues to communicate relevant changes to students.

Results are seen in the successful disbursement of aid and continual adjustment and correction of procedures in the face of system errors resulting in inaccurate student payment. There is a constant stream of communication between staff on issues found and solutions suggested by District program specialists. Updated trainings are consistently attended within the office and at the District.

Now that the entire District has experienced the conversion to People Soft, cross-training for informational purposes is being held so offices have a sense of navigation from the student perspective, and staff can more effectively recommend next steps. Staff will continue to study, identify and learn to work with program idiosyncrasies as they evolve.