

# ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, STUDENT SERVICES AND PRESIDENT'S CLUSTER ANNUAL PROGRAM PLAN WORKSHEET FOR 2020

**Program:** Financial Aid      **Planning Year:** 2020-21      **Last Year CPPR Completed:** 2017-18

**Unit:** Financial Aid      **Cluster:** Student Services

**Please complete the following information. Please note that responses are not required for all elements of this document.**

## I. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Describe changes to program mission, if applicable.

Our program mission statement remains the same:

The Financial Aid Office serves individuals and their families with financial need by promoting funding programs, awarding financial aid, and advocating on their behalf within the Cuesta community.

B. Describe any changes in primary relationships, internal and external, to the District.

- Two new Specialists started July 2019, replacing two vacancies
- New Dean of Student Services started September 2019
- Associate Dean of Financial Aid and Records position created and filled
- Associate Director of Financial Aid position created and filled
- Elimination of the Financial Aid Director position
- Temporary employee in the North County VRC
- Financial Aid liaison to the Monarch Center
- Financial Aid liaison to DSPS
- Financial Aid liaison to Veterans Services
- Financial Aid liaison to CaFE

C. List any changes to program service, including changes and improvements, since last year, if applicable.

The Financial Aid Office continues to review its internal processes to become more efficient. In the last year

- We have provided more cross training for staff which eliminates processing barriers for students.
- We have integrated with Veterans Services and now work closely to help Veteran students.

- We have streamlined the awarding and developed communication processes around fee waivers utilizing AB19 funds.
- Launched Financial Aid overview letters for students which provides a clear outlines of student aid awarded each term.
- Improved all Banner communications to students to be clear and specific to what action is required of the student to complete the award process.
- More individualized follow-up for students to increase FAFSA/ CADA completion. By sending targeted communications and making calls to students who have not yet applied but are enrolled.

D. List changes to program in the last year in reference to relevant statutory authority/program regulation and related compliance issues, if any.

- We updated our SAP and Professional Judgement policies to be student friendly while maintaining compliance.

**II. ANNUAL PROGRAM SUPPORT OF DISTRICT'S [MISSION STATEMENT](#), [INSTITUTIONAL GOALS](#), [INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES](#), AND/OR [INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES](#)**

A. Provide updates, if any, in how your program addresses or helps to achieve the District's Mission Statement in the last year. The Financial Aid Office helps achieve the District's Mission Statement through the following activities:

**1. Inspire diverse student population to achieve their educational goals.**

- Outreach to all segments of our community, particularly underrepresented groups. By visiting high schools and speaking to potential students and parents at different events such as Cash for College, Cougar Welcome Days and Promise Day.
- Providing financial aid to support students as they work towards their educational goals.

**2. Promote cultural, intellectual, and professional growth.**

- Financial Aid staff participate in professional growth by attending staff meetings, on campus events, and attend Statewide conferences designed to provide relevant, current, and updated information regarding regulatory and legislative issues.

This year's conferences included:

**Financial Aid**

- FSA (Federal Student Aid) Conference
- NASFAA Legislative and Leadership Conference
- CCCSFAA (California Community College Student Financial Aid Administrators)
- Ellucian Live
- WASFAA (Western Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators)
- CASFAA (California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators)

- New Directors provided by CCCCCO
- All Directors provided by CCCCCO and CCCSFAA

### Veterans

- Veterans Summit
- WAVES (Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists)

B. Provide updates, if any, to how your program addresses or helps to achieve the District’s Institutional Goals and Objectives, and/or operational planning initiatives in the last year. The district has developed a 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. These are activities the program is implementing to support the Strategic Plan.

### Institutional Goal 1: Increase student access to higher education

Institutional Objective 1C: Expand financial support and aid opportunities for students.

Financial Aid is a critical component for students accessing higher education. District data as well as nationwide studies show a correlation between the receipt of financial aid and multiple success-related metrics, including retention, persistence, credit accumulation, full-time enrollment, and graduation.

In their report “Aiding Success: The Role of Federal and State Financial Aid in Supporting California Community College Students”(available at [https://ticas.org/files/pub\\_files/acct\\_ticas\\_cccco\\_aiding\\_students\\_2017.pdf](https://ticas.org/files/pub_files/acct_ticas_cccco_aiding_students_2017.pdf) The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) makes the importance of financial aid clear:

*Every year, more than one million students rely on a combination of federal and state aid to enroll in a California Community College. This aid is a lifeline for students whose eventual success in college is far from guaranteed. More aid enables low-income students to afford more of their college costs, leading to higher rates of success. (pg.20)*

Our office uses an array of standard financial aid programs (e.g. state/federal grants, student loans, and work-study) and institutional innovations (e.g. Cuesta Promise, CASE emergency grants, emergency funding for re-entry students, student equity book vouchers, and ASCC book loans) to maximize the support that Cuesta students receive. We can’t provide full support for every student, but we can improve our approach to target those who need the support the most and allocate our limited resources accordingly.

Each year, staff members participate in events intended to increase enrollment and financial support for new and continuing students. In 2018, financial aid staff members

attended 77 events that reached approximately 2547 prospective and continuing students.

We will continue to increase the number of new FAFSA or CADA applications completed. The activities that we will use to support this outcome are inreach and outreach. By continuing to communicate to students who have not applied, and those that have received aid in the past and have not applied in a subsequent year. We will also continue our outreach in the high schools via Cash for College events, Parent nights and Financial Aid workshops, we can assist new students in applying for financial aid.

### **Institutional Goal 2: Completion**

Measure 1: Percent of student persistence in courses

The Financial Aid Office supports persistence in courses for all students but especially those receiving financial aid such as the CCPG fee waiver, AB19 fee waiver, Cuesta Promise or other aid. Most financial aid opportunities are tied to Satisfactory Academic Progress, timeframe or completion. Especially with the fee waivers. Students can lose their waiver if they are not completing the units they have attempted.

**How:** Timely communications to students, efficient processing on appeals.

### **Institutional Goal 3: Transfer**

Institutional Objective 3A: Increase the annual number of students transferring to a CSU or UC.

The Financial Aid Office supports transfer when it comes to the Cal Grant Transfer Entitlement award. We need to educate students on what that could mean for them when they transfer. The Cal Grant Transfer Entitlement Award is for students who were not awarded a High School Entitlement Award but are now transferring from a California Community College to an eligible bachelor's degree granting institution in California.

**How:** In the next year, we will look to partner with the transfer center and career center to deliver workshops to students educating them on financial aid and transferring.

### **Institutional Goal 4: Unit Accumulation**

Institutional Objective 4A: Decrease the average number of units accumulated by Cuesta College students.

The Financial Aid Office supports this by matching the number of units that it takes a student to complete a degree and adjusting our SAP policy to align. As the number of units

that a student takes to complete our policy will adjust and that will be clearer and consistent for students.

**How:** The SAP policy was adjusted to 132 units from 90 to minimize SAP appeals however with the upcoming implementation of CPOS, unit accumulation should go down. We intend to review the SAP units every year to adjust down in response to student behavior.

#### **Institutional Goal 5: Workforce**

Institutional Objective 5C: Increase proportion of all students with a job closely related to their field of study.

The Financial Aid Office supports this goal by utilizing Federal Work Study Funds to recommend that students work in their field of student on campus. This benefits the student as they will get hands on experience directly related to the career they want.

#### **Institutional Goal 6: Facilities and Technology**

The Financial Aid Office supports this goal by continuing to improve technology for our students as it relates to the application of financial aid, completing the process to receive aid, and how to keep the aid. We are almost entirely paperless in our office.

#### **Institutional Goal 7: Fiscal**

The Financial Aid Office supports this goal continuing to increase the number of Pell, AB540 and CCPG recipients. We understand how important that is in the Student Centered Funding Formula. We want students to complete the financial aid process early so they can receive aid and stay in school.

### III. ANNUAL MEASUREMENTS, ANALYSIS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Programs are often impacted by institutional or other organizational change. Please review program-relevant institutional data sources, such as institutional enrollment trends, which along with some other relevant program data, is available on the [SLOCCCD Institutional Research and Assessment website](#). Other organizational or departmental measurements may provide useful information for planning in your program; please describe those measurements and the data below.

#### A. Data Summary

- Describe data collection tool(s) used.
  - Argos reports
  - Banner population selections
  - MIS reports
  - Institutional Research data

#### Definitions for Financial Aid Data

- Students Served (FAFSA): All students who completed the FAFSA for the academic year and who were enrolled in at least one course at the Fall census date.
- Students Served (DREAM): All students who completed the CA Dream Act application and who were enrolled in at least one course at the Fall census date.
- 1st Year Persistence: First time students who were enrolled in at least one course at census, who received any financial aid, and who were enrolled in at least one course at census in the subsequent Fall.
- Units Completed /Units Attempted: The percentage of units attempted that were completed by students who received any financial aid in the academic year.

#### B. Students Served

The first collection of data (Figure 1) concerns the total amount of students served. Overall, we see that the numbers have started to move in a more positive direction. The fluctuation may simply reflect changes in the demographics of our students.

The number of applicants for the California Dream Act has declined. We expect to see this number increase due to the efforts of the new Monarch centers and the collaboration via a liaison in the financial aid office.

Category	Location	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2020/2021 Target	2025/2026 Target
Enrolled students who submitted a FAFSA	District-wide	5707	5803	5957	6319	6641
	SLO campus	4317	4301	4358	4844	4965
	North County Campus	1376	1400	1395	1612	1694
	South County Center	146	112	94	201	211
Enrolled students who submitted a Dream Act application	District-wide	143	154	138	102	110
	SLO campus	107	104	168	70	75
	North County Campus	46	44	57	40	43
	South County Center	5	2	2	1	1

### 1. First-year Student Persistence

Figure 2 compares the persistence of first-year students receiving financial aid with the overall population of first-year students. Students with financial aid in place continue to be more likely to persist than the general student population. We attribute this trend to the recent student success initiatives that have been implemented campus-wide over the last few years. This development offers us the opportunity to capitalize on this success by actively promoting support systems to financial aid recipients.

**Figure 2. First-year Student Persistence**

		Financial aid students	All students	Difference
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year Student Persistence</b>	2018-19	64.14%	55.37%	8.77%
	2017-18	65.61%	55.51%	10.10%
	2016-17	56.46%	54.08%	2.38%

### 2. Completion Rate (Units Completed / Units Attempted)

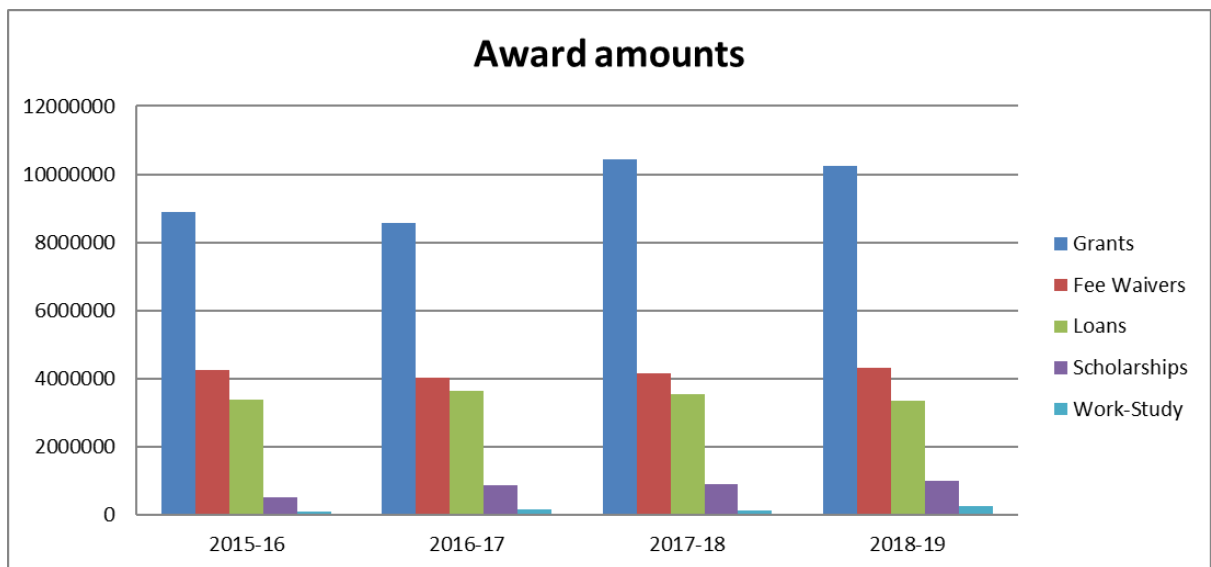
Figure 3 shows that in 17-18 the completion rate in the general population increased, while the completion rate for financial aid students declined. As in past years, the data suggest that financial assistance may not be a productive way of increasing course completion rate and that effective solutions may need to be developed in other areas of student service and instruction. We feel this is where CPOS and Guided Pathways will come in and help students stay on a path to complete their educational goals with less unit accumulation.

**Figure 3. Student Success (Completion Rate)**

	Year	Financial aid students	All students	Difference
<b>Student Success (Units Completed / Units Attempted)</b>	2018-19	76.47%	78.55%	-2.08%
	2017-18	77.16%	78.69%	-1.53%
	2016-17	76.04%	77.52%	-1.48%

**3. Other Relevant Program Data**

There is more financial aid available for students but the cost of living and a student’s cost of attendance often sees our neediest students not being eligible for more because they have reached there maximum. This can lead to students dropping classes to work more or choosing to put school on hold.



**B. Data Interpretation:**

- Describe results from previous improvement efforts to the program based on institutional or departmental changes.

As a result of the reorganization, our Financial Aid Technicians became Specialists. That has led to cross training in the department which is beneficial as there is generally high turnover in the Financial Aid Office.



- Identify areas if any that may need improvement for program quality and growth.

In order to increase efficiency, the Financial Aid office will continue to follow these steps:

- Evaluate all processes for automation and inclusion in Campus Logic system.
  - Continue loading ISIR data in mid-October to give students maximum time before fall to respond and complete their file;
  - Communicate often with students that have outstanding requirements by email (and text, if they opt-in); AND
  - Maintain well-trained staff in order to complete reviews in a timely fashion.
- Recommend any changes and updates to program based on the analysis above. For elements that require funding, complete the [Resource Plan Worksheets](#).

#### IV. ANNUAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES (ASOs AND SSOs), ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENTS

Your program has established either Administrative Service Outcomes or Student Service Outcomes. Those outcomes are assessed and tracked in the Course or Program Assessment Summary. Review CPAS documents for ASO or SSO assessment results for program outcomes.

- A. Describe any results from improvement efforts arising from ASO or SSO assessment in the last year.

In the past the Financial Aid office had 6 Student Services Outcomes.

**Student Services Outcome 1:** The Financial Aid department will coordinate outreach efforts with local community agencies in order to increase the annual number of valid FAFSAs received by Cuesta from prospective and returning students.

**Student Services Outcome 2:** The Financial Aid department will follow up with currently registered students in order to increase the percentage of enrolled students who have submitted a valid FAFSA.

**Student Services Outcome 3:** Through follow-up efforts designed to reach Pell-eligible students, the Financial Aid department will increase the percentage of enrolled students who have completed their financial aid file.

**Student Services Outcome 4:** By coordinating outreach efforts with other departments and community agencies, the Financial Aid department will increase the number of students who receive the Cuesta Promise.

**Student Services Outcome 5:** The Financial Aid department will decrease Cuesta's three-year cohort default rate by implementing a comprehensive default prevention program.

**Student Services Outcome 6:** Each year, the Financial Aid department will improve the efficiency of its operations as measured through average packaging time, the total number of files packaged, and the number of students packaged by the first day of school in the fall semester.

Throughout the process we found that we were tracking a lot of data to get to a certain point. A point where it takes less than 2 weeks to get a student financial aid, or how many students are packaged by the first day of the Fall semester. Now that we have reached that point, we set out to minimize our outcomes to achieve maximum results.

In our last program planning meeting the financial aid department felt that the list below will identify the outcomes we will use going forward.

**Student Services Outcome 1: Increase the number of new FAFSA/CADA applications that are completed.**

**Student Services Outcome 2: Early completion of continuing student applications.**

**Student Services Outcome 3: Reduce the number of student appeals, and students that are not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress.**

The activities we will use to target these students are:

- Inreach on campus: tabling and utilizing peer mentors to help spread the knowledge about financial aid to students who may not be aware.
- Outreach in the community: Presenting at events or workshops regarding financial aid.
- Specific communications to different groups of students or populations.

It is important that we continue to dispel the myth that students think they will not qualify. We want them to know how easy it is to renew the FAFSA and CADA applications.

- B. Recommend changes and updates to program based on assessment of program outcomes. For elements that require funding, complete the [Resource Plan Worksheets](#) and review the Resource Allocation Rubric.

## V. ANTICIPATED SERVICE CHALLENGES/CHANGES

Provide a brief description of challenges or changes anticipated in the next year and any needs that have emerged as a consequence.

**Role of technology for information, service delivery and data retrieval:**

Prospective students are more likely to read text messages and texting is immediate. Email can be an effective form of communication with some students, but research indicates that its utility has dropped significantly, especially for traditional-aged students. Since email communication is being replaced with text messaging it is going to be important to be able to text students regarding financial aid. A texting service made our number one on the resource plan worksheet this year.

## **VI. OVERALL BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Provide a brief description of the immediate budget request(s) made in your [Resource Plan](#) (formerly called the Unit Plan). These elements will be reflected in the District planning and budget process.

### **Elements:**

#### **A. Personnel**

##### **1. 2 Specialists**

This position will allow us to hire, train and spread out the workload of our current staff while covering additional locations. This will allow there to be consistent coverage of all areas and processes of financial aid. Additional tasks would be provided to staff once hired and trained.

##### **2. IT Staff in Financial Aid**

With the increase in complex technologies surrounding financial aid the department feels that an embedded IT staff member would be beneficial while implementing automation and additional functionality of Cal Grant Reporting.

#### **B. Equipment/furniture (other than technology)**

##### **Equipment upgrade**

The department has expressed its desire for added equipment such as privacy screens and swivel stands for the North County offices. As well as uniform shirts for professionalism and to support Cuesta in outreach events.

#### **C. Technology**

##### **1. Chat and/or texting communication with students**

The department needs to update the way that it communicates with students as traditional phone calls or emails have proven ineffective. We need to develop a campus-wide system of student notifications that allows students to pick their preferred method of contact. That way, important messages won't be lost because of a student's preference to use other media.

## SIGNATURE PAGE

Director(s), Manager(s), and/or Staff Associated with the Program

**Student Services and Administrative Services Programs: All full-time director(s), managers, faculty and/or classified staff in the program must sign this form.**

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Division Chair/Director Name	Signature	Date
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