

Cypress College

Student Support Services Quality Review Report

Department: Financial Aid Manager: Keith Cobb

Names of those participating in the report: _____

Date: 11/14/2008

Date of previous quality review: 07/18/2005

Student Satisfaction with Support Services Provided:

Please indicate the proportions (%) of students who rated each aspect as “excellent” or “good” (separately and combined). The Cypress College standard is met whenever 75% or more of responses fall in the “good” or “excellent” categories (combined).

Student satisfaction with:	Percent Responding		Percent Responding Good / Excellent (Combined %)	College Standard
	“Excellent”	“Good”		
Hours of operation	36.2	44.4	80.6	75%
Timeliness of response	31.9	37.6	69.5	75%
Clarity of procedures	29.5	35.3	64.7	75%
Quality of materials	33.2	43.9	77.1	75%
Staff helpfulness	40.3	30.6	70.9	75%
Staff knowledge	38.1	34.9	73.0	75%
Overall quality of service	35.0	37.1	72.1	75%
<i>Department-specific indicators (if applicable):</i>				

Change since last quality review

Briefly summarize the extent to which satisfaction has improved or declined since the last quality review cycle.

Since our last quality review, we improved slightly in five out of the seven areas. We improved in Hours of Operation, Timeliness of Response, Quality of Materials, Staff Knowledge, and Overall Quality of Service. Clarity of Procedures and Staff Helpfulness slightly declined. During our last quality review, we didn’t meet the college standards in any area. Since then, we were able to meet standards in Hours of Operation and Quality of Materials. It is possible that the drop in the score of Clarity of Procedures is because of the constant changes in the regulations that govern our program. The Financial Aid Office strives to educate our students through the

appropriate means (email, phone, website, in-person, workshops, in-class presentations, high school/community outreach visits). Staff Helpfulness will likely be viewed as problematic by a larger majority of the student body due to the timelines involved with the process of receiving financial aid. We try our best to give the students the best service possible, but with the increase of enrollment and the laws and regulations, our ability to control perceptions of our services is limited. We would also recommend revision to this survey item in future Quality Review cycles. It really isn't clear and there can be such variations as to what a student would consider "helpful" by "staff."

Narrative

Reflect on standards met and any standards not met.

Standards Met (optional) – To be used when department wants to improve on an indicator even though a standard for this indicator has not been met. May also be used to reflect upon major accomplishments.

Standards Not Met (required) – Please provide any insight into significant challenges or obstacles that may have contributed to low student satisfaction. Identify the types of changes necessary for improvement.

1. Timeliness of Response:

The level of service to our students has increased since the previous quality review and we have moved to a new location so we are easier to find. We have added more staff and we have received more money through BFAP. Therefore, our students are not waiting 8-10 weeks for checks and our turn around time has vastly dropped from prior years. Student complaints to the Dean of Student Support Services since Fall 2006 has also decreased.

The standard was not met because the Financial Aid Office has experienced a significant increase in FAFSA applications during the 2007-2008 academic year. Student comments reveal that the financial aid office could improve with processing/awarding aid in a timely manner. Data available in our office confirms that students who complete their files have all been processed within 2 to 3 weeks according to the date they turned in their completed application materials. However, other factors that impact timeliness of response include the number of corrections needed on their files and accuracy of self-reported data by the student. The financial aid office will revisit their communication strategy to improve student understanding of financial aid timelines and the appropriate responses required.

2. Clarity of Procedures:

Increasing student, faculty and staff understanding and awareness of financial aid services and processes has been a goal of the Financial Aid Office. During Spring 2008, a pilot program designed to improve collaboration with faculty to host in-class presentations was initiated. Efforts with the instructional departments regarding outreach efforts have been successful and outcomes will be assessed ongoing for improvement and implementation. We have also hosted financial aid workshops for students. Workshops on financial aid and loans are ongoing and scheduled throughout the year. Orientations for high schools have begun in conjunction with Student Success Week, EOPS workshops, and various college outreach activities. Outreach materials are available in print and online and reviewed/updated annually.

Financial aid procedures are complex and evolve annually. Based on a review of student comments, students express concerns with understanding information about basic elements of eligibility for our services. Because procedures are always changing and many students fail to read/understand the myriad of forms that are given to them, the Financial Aid Office has developed workshops, checklists, and plans for having staff serve as resource advisors during peak periods in multiple campus locations. Annually (typically each April), our policies and procedures manual is updated.

3. Staff Helpfulness:

It should be noted that staff have attended 'customer service' division in-service trainings in June 2007 and November 2007. A total of 8.0 hours of training was dedicated to staff on topics about customer service, attitude, and caring. Staff will continue to attend workshops related to financial aid. With the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), staff members will attend local, regional, and national workshops to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Staff helpfulness is cited as both a strength and weakness based on student comments. Many issues impact perceptions of staff helpfulness. During this quality review period, there was an increase in student enrollment, which has forced staff to spend large amounts of time on the phones and at the front counter. This, coupled with increased requests for financial aid, has created challenges for staffing and processing. As a result, phone and counter staffing has been reviewed so that student hourly and staff coverage is balanced. Also, for improvements during peak periods, a numeric waiting system was integrated. Staffing schedules will continually be reviewed to ensure that coverage is enhanced at peak periods. Our staff meetings detail some of our strategies to manage our growth and it is expected that student's will perceive staff helpfulness even more positively as our strategies for improving access and communication are implemented.

4. Staff Knowledge

The Financial Aid Office strives to increase staff knowledge of planning, policy and procedural changes. All financial aid personnel are included in phases of planning, especially with regarding to Financial Aid Office goals and objectives. We maintain a comprehensive policy and procedures manual for Financial Aid. We also maintain use of the NSLDS – National Student Loan Data Service – to help students identify and fix loan defaults and grant overpayments. All financial aid specialists and the director have access to NSLDS so that we are current on a student's loan status, pell overpayments, and on the institution's default rate.

Students indicate that they have a thirst for knowledge about financial aid programs/services. However, they are ambivalent in their responses about staff knowledge. According to their responses, students expect greater explanation about financial aid programs and procedures. Staff will be reminded and trained further about the need to 'individualize' attention to each student and their concerns. A common theme throughout the student comments and previous quality reviews is consideration for first time students. As a result, financial aid staff are encouraged to ask or research each student to determine if they are a first time student. This will enable the staff to delve further into their situation and take the time to explain options so that the student can be better served.

5. Overall Quality Service:

Staff will have to continue to make strides to be more student-oriented and to view financial aid within the scope of the institution. The tendency is to become buried behind the regulations and ignore the human aspects of our services. The financial aid staff have improved in their approach to delivering financial aid funds to the students at Cypress College and should be commended for their efforts in revitalizing and enhancing the program—especially considering the growth we have experienced.

This standard is where the most improvement from the Financial Aid Office is expected. The combination of providing quality information, service, and support is crucial for the success of our students. Although our quality of service ratings improved from the last quality review in 2005, it still failed to meet the college

standard. Detailed below is our long range planning goals. We will strive to improve our ratings and make the necessary adjustments for better quality of service.

Long-range Plan and Objectives

In the following section, identify general goals and specific, measurable objectives your area plans to achieve within the next three years. Programs should identify 3-5 goals, with at least one goal per year. Goals set for next year that require fiscal resources must also be submitted as a Budget Request and Action Plan (separate form).

FINANCIAL AID GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal #1 **Student Services SLO focus:** To develop Financial Aid Student Learning Outcomes for (2008-2009).

- Work with the Dean of Student Support Services on developing SLO's for the financial aid office.
- Collaborate with staff for appropriate assessment and evaluation of SLO's.
- Coordinate activities for SLO data collection.
- Direct staff on time line for SLO completion.
- Update Dean of Student Support Services on SLO progress during evaluation period.

Goal #2 **Educational Master Plan Focus:** Expand methods of visibility of the Financial Aid programs available through aggressive outreach on and off campus.

- To increase awareness of Financial Aid and improve clarity of procedures.
- Coordinate a joint effort with the student ambassador program, student support services outreach team, and off-campus contacts to maximize effectiveness of outreach efforts.
- Host "Student Support Services Success Week" every semester to improve student, faculty, and staff awareness of Financial Aid.
- At the request of feeder high schools and local contacts, provide financial aid/money management workshops for feeder schools and/or community contacts.

Goal #3 **Strategic Plan Focus (Direction 2):** To manage responsive, efficient, and a quality Financial Aid office that will enable students to successfully accomplish their academic and personal goals.

- To oversee the Financial Aid office and ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.
- To improve perception of customer service and offer a student-centered approach to service.
- Refine office goals as appropriate with changes in Policy and Procedures or delivery of services to students.

- Routinely, meet with staff to ensure adequate planning and responsive administration of aid.
- Ongoing, assess needs of the office and ensure services, programs, and personnel are operating satisfactorily or better.
- To evaluate and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our programs and services by seeking input from staff members and constituents regarding decision-making processes.

Goal #4 **Strategic Plan Focus (Direction 2)**: Oversee financial aid outreach events.

- Work with the local high schools and the local community to help increase the awareness and availability of financial aid. At Cypress College.
- Continue to plan and coordinate activities and to ensure each event functions and serves a diverse population while supporting the recruitment efforts, learning needs of prospective students and their families, and image of Cypress College.

Goal #5 **Strategic Plan Focus (Direction 2)**: Manage technological improvements in the financial aid office.

- Work with the campus and district to improve access to financial aid.
- Improve access to applying for the FAFSA on-line.
- Improve access to applying for the BOG Fee Waiver on-line.
- Refine publications, image, and content of the financial aid publications.
- Expand methods of communication (i.e. technology—podcasts, web, etc.) for financial aid.
- Educate students on the electronic process of all applications (i.e. FAFSA and BOG).

Use the above outline format to add additional goals or objectives as necessary.

<p>Reminder: If fiscal resources are needed for next year's goals, submit a separate Budget Request and Action Plan for budget unit review.</p>
