

## Enrollment Services, Financial Aid Unit

### Program Review

Reporting Period: 2019 through 2022

#### **Part 1: Review of Past 3 Years**

##### *1. Service Unit Outcomes/Program Learning Outcomes/Student Learning Outcomes Assessment*

###### *A. Summarize assessment results.*

The Jefferson State Community College Office of Financial Aid has a primary purpose to increase the educational accessibility for students by the reduction of financial barriers as much as possible. Our office desires to provide assistance to students to meet the basic cost related to their educational needs. All students with an eligible financial need are able to request financial assistance; federal and state regulations require that these funds be applied to those who demonstrate financial need. The Office of Financial Aid places integrity and fairness in the delivery of services among its major objectives.

Over the last three years, Jefferson State Community College has experienced a steady enrollment despite complications from the pandemic. Fall headcount has varied less than 3% over the last three years.

Furthermore, the financial aid office has been able to assist students more effectively through the use of technology at all four campus and site locations. The implementation of the Self Service kiosk allows students to scan their documents directly into our processing system which now eliminates the misplacing of student documents and allows easier access of information to be processed by counselors. The use of Zoom, allows the financial aid office to create a segway of direct communication for students at our two site and campus locations without having to hire additional personnel. Also, to keep students informed of their status, as well as aware of the financial aid guidelines and state and federal aid regulations, students can now access their JSCC email and pipeline accounts to view their award and all financial aid correspondence.

We have served our students over the last three years by using technological advances internally and externally, improving upon interdepartmental communications, and utilizing federal and state assistance while maintaining compliance. To be considered for federal student aid, students must be unconditionally admitted into an eligible degree-seeking program. Once this is achieved, students must apply for federal financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Our efforts with guiding students have helped our institution see a significant increase in the amount of Title IV aid processed each year.

- The amount of Title IV Aid disbursed increased from \$19,133,300 to \$22,108,959 (15%) from '19-'20 to '20-'21
  - o '20-'21 to '21-'22 was another increase, but CARES ACT funding was involved
- The number of students in our population utilizing Title IV funds increased from 33% to 48% (by 15%) over three years.

<b>Measurements</b>	<b>19-20</b>	<b>20-21</b>	<b>21-22</b>
Scholarship Award Amounts	\$2,033,169.25	\$2,902,021.00	\$2,935,834.00
Federal Student Loans Disbursed	\$5,583,257.00	\$8,244,793.00	\$10,035,945.00
Veterans Affairs Awards	\$936,583.00	\$789,385.00	\$600,589.00
State Aid Awarded	\$142,210.00	\$161,802.00	\$181,854.00

## **Data Reflecting the Federal Student Aid Request over a Three Year Span**

- B. *If applicable, identify the data regularly collected and or reported as part of program compliance.*

The office compiles the total number of students seen daily from sign in sheets used at the campus location to monitor the need of personnel at campus and site locations. Currently the two site locations uses Zoom to assist students with financial aid questions and concerns. A log is kept to monitor the number of students that speak with a financial aid counselor.

Our office utilizes reports formulated through a software program known as ARGOS, which provides data and reports that are needed to monitor the outcome of Title IV funding received and disbursed to students. We also track information regarding scholarships disbursements, as well as, advising and enrollment information needed to complete financial aid student files for awarding.

2. *Analysis (as it relates to progress in achieving unit goals)*
- A. Primarily state and federal requirements are significant external conditions that will have a substantial impact on the daily operations of the Financial Aid department. The Department of Education continuously develops ever-changing regulations that require the financial aid office to monitor daily to ensure that the office stays in compliance with polices for Title IV funding. The Alabama Community College System has specific requirements the institution is required to follow which requires the financial aid department to incorporate these policies within the federal requirements.

- B. With the rapid growth in the number of financial aid students, the need for technological advancements has been utilized through the financial aid office by the implementation of a self-service kiosk, Zoom and the email correspondence for awards and additional financial aid requirements.
- C. Our office works collaboratively with various departments to ensure that students are following curriculum guidelines actually as it pertains to course completion and the awarding of aid. The Department of Education has a clear policy on the funding of repeat courses for students as well as courses not required for students majors in which we work with advisors and academic departments to ensure these regulations are enforced.
- D. Our office communicates with students via their JSCC email and MyJSCC account; this process has ensured that students are able to receive information regarding course issues, additional requirements and financial aid award in a timely and efficient manner which eliminates error in mailing address as well as consumption of paper. The Jefferson State financial aid webpage also provides students with information regarding the applying and processing of financial aid as well as contact information for students with questions or concerns.

### **3. Primary Functions/Primary Purpose/Unit Mission**

- A. The Financial Aid Director's position has changed twice since the beginning of this review cycle. The unit does not anticipate any further changes in the leadership of the unit.
- B. Since the financial aid office began implementing the use of Zoom to assist students at campus and site locations, the positive response and the number of students assisted has reduced the number of problems and complaints greatly. Furthermore, the students now having full time access to their financial aid account by way of their JSCC email or MyJSCC account, they are better able to fulfill any requirements necessary that may be time sensitive.

### **4. Goal Progress**

- A. The Jefferson State Financial Aid office continuously works to exceed all goals created over the last three years. With the use of technology, our office has been able to implement an ecofriendly environment by allowing students to print only documents that are required to process their aid through their email or pipeline accounts. This innovative method has allowed our students to have full access to their status and documents needed 24 hours a day and provide students with methods to submitting them as well either through scanning kiosk, email or fax. The Jefferson State Financial Aid office has established a general email addresses ([finaid@jeffersonstate.edu](mailto:finaid@jeffersonstate.edu) and [va@jeffersonstate.edu](mailto:va@jeffersonstate.edu) ) where students can email any questions and concerns regarding their financial aid award or the processing of their VA information for the upcoming term. Our office has also began to send email notification to students who are taking classes outside of their major has helped ensure the students are receiving the maximum aid available and on course to graduate during the expected time frame.
- B. Adequate resources have been provided to achieve goals.
- C. The impact of resource allocations our area has received over the past three years has allowed our office to purchase various equipment required to communicate with students and

process information more efficient and effectively. The purchasing of scanners and the implementation of the Xtender software has allowed our office to receive student documents in a 24-48 hour window as compared to a 7 day time period. This method has also provided a substantial decrease in the misplacing of student's information needed to process a student's file.

## **Part 2: Implications of Program Review for Developing 3 Year Plan**

### **1. Vision and Direction of Unit**

- A. Based on the results of our evaluation, we see the office continuously developing processes that will allow us to remain a paperless office. With the continuous increase of student enrollment, we desire to be able to employ more personnel to allow each campus or site the ability to process and assist students at their respective locations. With the increase of various technological systems, the financial aid office is finding ways to assist with processing and awarding a students' file.
- B. The major condition that may affect the financial aid office is the continuous changes with the verification process as determined by the Department of Education. Each year the Department of Education reviews past policies and procedures to ensure that revised federal regulations regarding aid are implemented properly. This process places tremendous responsibilities on the Financial Aid offices to ensure that all methods are implemented properly to remain in compliance with federal aid regulations. The constant change in the economy has in past years played a key part in the changes in these procedures and the number of student's returning to college and requiring federal assistance due to a change in their economic status may possibly continue to increase as well.
- C. The financial aid office must constantly collaborate with the Admissions Office to ensure that new students, receiving financial aid submit documents required by the Department of Education; and that these documents are filed in a respective area with easy accessibility for auditing purposes. We must also work closely with the Advising Department to ensure that students receiving financial aid are enrolled in courses only required for their program of study. This is imperative to the awarding of financial aid to ensure the college remains in compliance with federal aid regulations.
- D. It is important that the Financial Aid office keeps the Admissions and Advising departments informed on all new federal requirements issued by the Department of Education.
- E. The Financial Aid Office understands that it is essential to have the resources to send personnel to conferences and workshops to stay abreast on the ever changing regulations issued by the Department of Education. It is important that we encourage financial aid personnel to attend workshops and conferences and provide support for them to do so.

**Part 3: Evidence of Staff Participation in Program Review**

1. The Director and Assistant Director meet weekly to discuss areas of concerns, to work on procedures as well as the implementation of various departmental policies. Quarterly meetings are occasionally held to discuss recent changes noted by the Department of Education and ways of implementation for these policies and procedures.

2. n/a

3.

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LaReatha Smith
Rose Cobb
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Natalya Clark
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