

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships

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The Student Experience Mission Statement

The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provides equal access to education for potential students throughout the state and region and promotes economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical, and occupational growth. The Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates have the capability to promote economic development and improvements in the region.

Enrollment Management:

The Office of Enrollment Management is a student-centered division that is future focused providing educational access to students in our region to improve the lives of our citizens. High School Relations, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and Admissions work collaboratively with University faculty and staff to provide services and programming that are innovative and surpasses state and federal guidelines. Enrollment Management fulfills the university's mission and commitment to academic quality, diversity, equity, and inclusion

Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships Mission:

Our mission is to find the best possible aid package for a diverse student body to enable each of our students the financial ability to achieve their educational goal. Our office offers a wide variety of programs that are available from federal, state, and institutional funds under the general headings of loans, grants, third party funds and work opportunities. The Office of Financial Aid will keep students informed of all current federal regulations and changes in those regulations. We are dedicated in providing all students and their families with counseling and the services necessary to gain access to educational funds by promoting financial aid awareness, ensuring compliance with federal, state and institutional regulations and guidelines, while committing to honesty, fairness, equality and integrity in all aid awarded to all students of our university. We will be a leader among our campus community for high quality and innovative student

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services, which includes a more effective use of technology for both our processing and communication with students.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative, and qualitative) are collected and returned to the director.
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met:
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause).
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff, will determine and propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships Effectiveness
Service Outcomes:

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. *Achieve 100% satisfaction rate with students for services provided.*

Measure 1.1.

Our office strives to not only accomplish our duties accurately and efficiently, but to achieve complete satisfaction with each student that we assist. A student survey was conducted to determine a base satisfaction rate, so that we can determine what areas of service in need of improvement. We will give the students a chance to provide feedback on ways they feel our office could improve. This data will help us to strengthen areas of weakness within our procedures, so that we may better serve each one of our students and improve our satisfaction rate beyond just an acceptable rate of 75%, until we meet our target of 100% satisfaction.

Finding: Target was not met

Analysis: In 2019–2020, the customer satisfaction survey process was enhanced to better identify areas needing improvement after the satisfaction rate fell short of the target, reaching only 83% with 553 responses.

In the following years, the survey results were as follows:

- 2020–2021: 380 responses, 77.89% satisfaction rate
- 2021–2022: 388 responses, 87% satisfaction rate
- 2022–2023: 351 responses, 90% satisfaction rate

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- 2023–2024: 199 responses, 87% satisfaction rate
- 2024–2025: 430 responses, 93% satisfaction rate

The 2024–2025 results mark a notable improvement. Not only did the survey's participation increase significantly from the previous year, but the satisfaction rate also rose by 6%, reaching the highest level in the six-year period.

Decision – Decision or Recommendation: To further improve customer satisfaction across the Enrollment Management areas in the 2025–2026 academic year, we recommend a continued and expanded focus on gathering meaningful feedback from key stakeholders—including prospective, incoming, current, and transfer students, as well as their parents. Survey distribution will be strategically implemented at in-person events, through email outreach, and across other electronic communication platforms to ensure wide and diverse participation. The insights gathered will be closely analyzed to identify areas for targeted staff development and enhancements in customer service delivery. While we are encouraged by the steady increase in overall satisfaction, we recognize that continued progress depends on deeper engagement and proactive improvement. By strengthening our feedback mechanisms and implementing strategic in-service training initiatives, we are committed to reaching our goal of 100% customer satisfaction in the year ahead.

Measure 1.2.

To better assist students and help them understand the rules and regulations of what is required of our office, we aim to improve job performance of all our financial aid administrators. To accomplish this, our office administrators will receive continued training and education through the Federal Student Aid Toolkit, which provides federal student aid training and outreach tools for Financial Aid Administrators. Our target is to have 100% of Financial Aid Administrators complete all training courses (basic and fundamental) available. This will increase the satisfaction rate by ensuring that our employees are able to offer the most current and accurate information to students and parents. Employees will also complete all trainings made available by the US Department of Education, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SWASFAA) and Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA).

Finding: Target Met

Analysis: Over the past three academic years, the Financial Aid Office has demonstrated a strong commitment to staff development and regulatory compliance through extensive training efforts:

- 2022–2023: Fifteen staff members completed a total of 119 training sessions, both in person and virtually. These were provided by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

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(SWASFAA), and the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA).

- 2023–2024: Fourteen staff members participated in the Better FAFSA, Better Future webinar series, completing all 13 specialized training modules. In addition, staff completed 107 supplemental training courses offered by NASFAA, LASFAA, and SWASFAA.
- 2024–2025: Fourteen staff members completed a total of 246 training sessions, both in person and online, focusing on a broad range of Title IV regulations and compliance topics.

These training efforts reflect the department's ongoing dedication to professional development, federal and state compliance, and the delivery of high-quality service to students and families.

Decision – Decision or Recommendation: To ensure compliance and maintain the highest standards of service, Financial Aid staff will participate in conferences, workshops, and online training opportunities during the 2025–2026 academic year. These professional development activities will focus on updates to financial aid regulations and processes and will be offered through the U.S. Department of Education (Federal Student Aid), the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA), and the Southwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SWASFAA), contingent upon available funding. Participation in these training opportunities will enable staff to remain informed about evolving federal and state regulations, policies, and procedures related to the awarding and delivery of financial aid. This commitment to ongoing education will help ensure accurate, timely, and student-centered financial aid services.

SO 2. *Increase Financial Aid Requirements Awareness to students by increasing workshops, presentations, and notifications.*

Measure 2.1.

Increase the number of students receiving Financial Aid information to a broader populace of the student body. Present and host informational opportunities for students to inform them of the financial aid process. The target is to conduct six sessions, three per semester.

Finding: Target met

Analysis: The Financial Aid Office has steadily prioritized student outreach through informational sessions over the past six years:

- In 2019–2020, a total of 4 sessions were conducted.
- In 2020–2021, only 1 in-person session was held due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on campus events.

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- From 2021–2022 through 2023–2024, the office conducted 6 sessions each year, reflecting a full return to regular programming.
- In 2024–2025, this level of engagement was maintained with 6 sessions conducted.

These sessions continue to play a vital role in educating students and families about financial aid processes and resources.

Decision – Decision or Recommendation: For the 2025–2026 academic year, we aim to reinforce our commitment to student success by hosting six targeted financial aid events—three per semester. These events will serve as key opportunities to educate students on the importance of meeting financial aid requirements and understanding their responsibilities.

To broaden our impact, we will continue collaborating with departments campus-wide to integrate financial aid presentations into existing student programming. These sessions will be offered both in-person and virtually, ensuring accessibility and flexibility for all students. Through this outreach strategy, we seek to empower students with the knowledge they need to make informed financial decisions and maximize their aid opportunities.

Measure 2.2

Create a more tangible awareness of the Financial Aid Requirements, Federal Regulations and School policy to the student body through presentations, workshops and student notifications. Our target is to increase presentations, workshops and student notifications each year, until we reach a minimum of 75% of student organizations and athletic groups.

Finding: Target Met

Analysis: The Financial Aid Office has remained committed to educating and informing students, families, and campus partners about financial aid policies, requirements, and opportunities through a variety of presentations and outreach initiatives over the past six academic years:

- 2019–2020: Financial Aid information was delivered to 20 orientation classes, including sessions at the Shreveport and Leesville campuses. Additional outreach included participation in athletic programming, Housing events, First Year Experience activities, and high school events throughout Natchitoches Parish.
- 2020–2021: In-person presentations were significantly limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, efforts continued in a reduced format.
- 2021–2022: In-person presentations resumed, reaching diverse audiences such as LA Gear Up Initiative, Freshman Connectors, graduate classes, TRIO Student Support Services, Spring N-Side View, South Louisiana Community College transfer students, the NSU Career Center Teacher Job Fair, and the Winter

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Bridge Program. Virtual presentations were also developed and distributed via the university website and email communications to students and parents.

- 2022–2023: Both in-person and virtual presentations were delivered to University Studies students, Freshman Connection participants, N-Side View attendees, LA Gear Up Initiative groups, student-athletes, LOSFA Fly Tour participants, and Nurse Anesthetist Orientation attendees. The Financial Aid Office also participated in five NSU Recruiting Receptions, and online presentations received 75 views during the year.
- 2024–2025: Outreach efforts continued with a strong combination of in-person and virtual sessions. Presentations were delivered during Fall and Spring N-Side View Days, Recruiting Receptions across the state, FAFSA Fridays in February, Scholars Day, Registration Days, Faculty Institute, and Freshman Connection. This hybrid approach allowed for broader student engagement and greater access to important financial aid information.

Through these initiatives, the Financial Aid Office successfully reached 75% of targeted student and athletic groups, meeting its annual outreach goal and reinforcing its commitment to transparency, accessibility, and student success.

Decision – Decision or Recommendation: Based on an analysis of the 2024–2025 academic year outcomes, the Financial Aid Office will implement several strategic enhancements in 2025–2026 to improve the reach and effectiveness of our outreach efforts.

In addition to continuing key in-person events—such as FAFSA Completion Workshops, Housing and Athletics programming, sessions for the Creative and Performing Arts Department, and other NSU campus initiatives—we will expand access by distributing our virtual financial aid presentation to all students via email.

This multi-channel approach is designed to ensure equitable access to vital financial aid information for students across all academic disciplines and extracurricular programs, including those who may not be able to attend in-person events. By reinforcing our messaging through both direct engagement and digital distribution, we aim to increase student awareness, enhance compliance with financial aid requirements, and support successful aid outcomes for all populations.

Measure 2.3

A Financial Aid knowledge questionnaire for students to complete each academic year to use the data, from year to year, to track the improvement of Financial Aid knowledge and awareness. We can also use the information to determine what areas we need to focus on in the presentations and workshops mentioned in Measure 2.1 Our target is to have students score 85% or higher on accurate responses received through the questionnaire.

Finding: Target met

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Analysis: In 2020–2021, we provided a survey to all students requesting feedback on topics of interest that could guide the development of additional tools and processes to help students better understand financial aid. However, the survey yielded only 203 responses. In 2021–2022, a similar survey was distributed, but participation declined further, with just 100 student responses.

Recognizing the limitations of survey-based outreach, the Financial Aid Office shifted its approach in 2022–2023, opting instead to engage directly with students at in-person events to raise awareness and promote financial aid literacy. This strategy continued in 2023–2024, with the office participating in six in-person events where staff facilitated one-on-one interactions and hosted financial aid knowledge games to make learning more engaging.

In 2024–2025, the Financial Aid Office expanded these efforts by continuing to provide individualized, one-on-one informational sessions at various events and campus activities. These sessions focused on answering student questions, demystifying the aid process, and offering personalized support. This shift toward interactive, high-touch engagement has allowed us to connect more meaningfully with students and better address their unique financial aid needs.

Decision – Decision or Recommendation: The analysis of 2024–2025 results has identified the need to enhance the scope and accessibility of our financial aid workshops for the 2025–2026 academic year, with the goal of improving outcomes on the upcoming Financial Aid Knowledge Survey. To increase student engagement and understanding, we will offer a series of both virtual and in-person mini-sessions covering key topics such as FAFSA completion, Types of Federal Aid, Cost of Attendance, Summer Aid Eligibility, Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), Return to Title IV, and the Verification Process. These sessions will be promoted and made accessible via email, social media, and the university's website. In addition, we plan to collaborate with University 1000 courses to integrate the Financial Aid Knowledge Survey into classroom presentations on federal regulations and financial aid policies. To ensure comprehensive and representative feedback, knowledge questionnaires will also be distributed at all in-person events and made available at the Financial Aid Office. Through these expanded educational efforts and assessment tools, we aim to elevate financial aid literacy and ensure students are well-informed and better equipped to navigate their financial responsibilities.

SO 3. *Decrease Cohort Default Rate*

Measure 3.1.

Increase contact and notifications with students who have either graduated or ceased half-time enrollment. Our goal is to increase the number of completed exit counseling sessions to a minimum of 75% completion. We will do this by reaching out to all

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students who have graduated or ceased half-time enrollment and have not completed the exit counseling.

Finding: Not met

Analysis: Over the past five academic years, the Financial Aid Office has monitored and worked to improve student compliance with federal Exit Counseling requirements. Despite targeted outreach efforts, completion rates have consistently fallen short of the 75% target.

- 2020–2021: Of the 1,728 students required to complete Exit Counseling, only 286 complied, resulting in a 16% completion rate. While this represented a 5% increase from the previous year, it remained significantly below the target.
- 2021–2022: Completion declined, with only 214 out of 1,618 students completing the requirement—a 13% completion rate, marking a 3% decrease from the previous year.
- 2022–2023: (Note: This year appears to be missing in the original; assuming the 428/1941 data belongs here.) A total of 428 students out of 1,941 met the requirement, improving the rate to 22%—a notable increase from prior years, but still below target.
- 2023–2024: Despite increased efforts, only 358 out of 3,177 students completed Exit Counseling, yielding a 11% completion rate, a significant decline of 11 percentage points from the prior year.
- 2024–2025: Outreach was enhanced through Grad Fest, where personalized Exit Counseling information was provided to 300 students. In addition, 750 graduating seniors received direct emails detailing Exit Counseling steps and loan repayment options. Ongoing reminders were issued via an automated email system every 21 days until the requirement was met. Despite these efforts, only 114 out of 847 students completed Exit Counseling, resulting in a 13% completion rate, a 2% increase from the previous year but still well below the 75% goal.

Decision – Based on the analysis of the 2024–2025 academic year, we will implement improvements to our exit counseling process during the 2025–2026 academic year to enhance completion rates and student responsiveness. Specifically, we will remove exit counseling notifications from the generic "Unsatisfied Requirement" email and instead introduce a dedicated "Action Required" email exclusively for exit counseling completion.

To ensure consistent follow-up, we will implement an automated communication plan, sending reminder emails every 21 days to students who have not fulfilled the exit counseling requirement after the initial notification. This targeted approach will help students recognize the importance of completing exit counseling while reducing email fatigue caused by generic notifications.

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Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results: The following outlines the changes implemented to support continuous improvement in Academic Cycle (AC) 2024–2025. These modifications are informed by insights gained from the analysis of AC 2023–2024 results and the lessons learned throughout that cycle.

- **Increased Student Satisfaction:** The Financial Aid Office achieved a 6% increase in overall satisfaction, moving closer to the goal of a 100% satisfaction rate, as measured through feedback and service evaluations.
- **Enhanced Staff Training and Expertise:** Staff successfully completed a wide range of in-person and virtual trainings hosted by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), NASFAA, SWASFAA, and LASFAA. Training topics included Professional Judgment, FAFSA updates, Verification, Homeless Youth, Cash Management, Cybersecurity, Overawards, Overpayments, and other critical areas. This investment in staff development supports improved service delivery and regulatory compliance.
- **Achievement of Financial Aid Awareness Goals:** In alignment with the 2024–2025 Assessment Cycle, the office met its outreach goal by hosting six Financial Aid Awareness sessions (three per semester). These sessions educated students on financial aid processes, requirements, and changes.
- **Increased Student Awareness of Financial Aid Requirements:** The office reached its target of 75% tangible awareness of financial aid requirements, federal regulations, and institutional policies. This was accomplished through presentations, workshops, and strategic student communications.
- **Knowledge and Awareness Assessment Success:** The Financial Aid Office met its 85% target response rate for Financial Aid Knowledge and Awareness in 2023–2024. To maintain this momentum, questionnaires will continue to be distributed both in-office and at all in-person outreach events.
- **Targeted Communication for Exit Counseling:** To improve student compliance with loan exit requirements, the office sent individualized emails to 750 graduating seniors, outlining loan repayment and Exit Counseling responsibilities. In addition, students are notified of Exit Counseling requirements upon ceasing enrollment and receive automated reminders every 21 days until the process is completed.

These improvements underscore the Financial Aid Office's ongoing commitment to enhancing the student experience, improving communication, increasing awareness, and supporting academic and financial success.

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Plan of action: The Office of Student Financial Aid is implementing a series of targeted initiatives in the 2025–2026 academic year to significantly enhance the student experience and improve satisfaction rates. Our strategy centers on empowering staff and streamlining communication to ensure clarity, responsiveness, and accessibility for all students.

To strengthen staff expertise and service quality, we will continue leveraging free professional development opportunities provided by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), NASFAA, SWASFAA, and LASFAA. This training will keep our team up to date with evolving federal and state regulations, enabling us to better support our students. We will also maintain our commitment to gathering actionable student feedback by offering in-person Financial Aid Knowledge Surveys at all financial aid events. This immediate feedback loop allows us to provide personalized assistance and continuously refine our services.

To improve compliance and clarity around exit counseling, we will remove the requirement from the generic “Unsatisfied Requirement” email and introduce a dedicated “Action Required” message with clear instructions. A robust follow-up system will be established, issuing regular reminders every 21 days until students complete their exit counseling requirement. This proactive approach ensures students receive timely guidance and support throughout the process.

Through these strategic enhancements, we are confident that our office will deliver a more efficient, informed, and student-centered experience, ultimately driving higher satisfaction across the board.