

# Assessment Cycle 2018-2019

## 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 in order 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*

#### **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 used 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 not met

**Analysis:** In 2016-2017 our target was not met with only a 69% satisfaction rate. In 2017-2018 we showed an eleven percent increase with an overall 80.06% satisfaction rate with 19.4% of responses showed they did not feel confident with the assistance they received from 331 responses. In 2018-2019 multiple surveys were available for students throughout the year. Students were given the opportunity to complete surveys in person at our Financial Aid Bingo event, through email requested survey link, and a link provided in staff emails to students. Through these avenues, we received a total of

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824 survey completions with an overall satisfaction rate of 89.7%. This is a 9.64% increase in satisfaction rate from the 2017-2018 year. Although we did not meet our goal of 100% satisfaction, our efforts to increase overall satisfaction is showing a positive trend from year to year.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results our office will use the information received on the survey to improve customer satisfaction within office interactions with potential and incoming students, current and transferring students, and parents. We to strive to reach our goal of 100% satisfaction. We will continue satisfaction surveys to be included in all emails to students by staff within the Office of Student Financial Aid as well as all Financial Aid events. We will use data from the surveys for additional staff trainings to help increase our overall satisfaction rates.

### **Measure 1.2.**

In order 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 of our financial aid administrators. To accomplish this, our office administrators will receive continued training and education through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Credentialing. Currently, eight (8) out of the fifteen (15) employees in the Financial Aid Office have two or more credentials through the NASFAA Credentialing Service. Our target is to have 100% of Financial Aid Administrators credentialed in all areas of financial aid services. 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.

**Finding:** Target not met

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of these results, in 2018-19 we were again unable to pursue credentialing opportunities due to lack of funding for the 2018-2019 award year. Our findings remain with the current credential rate from 2017-2018, which is eight (8) out of the fifteen (15) employees having two or more credential certifications, for a total of 17 credential certifications within the Financial Aid Office.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results we completed and submitted a Budget Enhancement Proposal Request for the 2019-2020. As a result, our administrators will be able to complete additional credentialing opportunities. We were approved for funds to allow nine (9) administrators the opportunity to earn two credential certificates for the 2019-2020 award year. Due to time and budget constraints, we will focus on online courses and credentialing, rather than face to face courses due to limited local opportunities. Instead of requiring all fifteen (15) employees to earn credentials, our office will focus on the administrators who work and are responsible for verification and awarding of federal aid recipients. There are 9 Financial Aid administrators who will pursue a total of 17 separate credential titles each

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for a total of 153 credentials in the Financial Aid Office. These credentialing tests consist of attending National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators classes and completing the credential test for each topic.

**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 not met

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was not met. The Financial Aid Office attended Graduate/Transfer Day, Nursing Night in Shreveport, Newcomer's mixer, and N-side view to allow students opportunities to get information on the Financial Aid process and ask any questions. Although our office was not able to attend all the events attended in 2017-2018 during the 2018-2019 award year, the Financial Aid office did attend N-Side View and Grad Fest. We were able to attend new events in the 2018-2019 year, including Alumni Receptions, Empowerment Session and the Race to Register events to reach out to students regarding Financial Aid information and awareness.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 we hope to combine the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 events and any other events created to increase informational opportunities giving students every possibility to learn the importance of the financial aid requirements and responsibilities. For the 2019-2020 academic year we will all reach out to all departments campus wide to allow us to present financial aid materials to students.

### **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 not met

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of these results in 2018-2019 year our office provided Financial Aid requirements and policies to 20

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orientation classes, including Shreveport and Leesville campuses. Information was also provided to during athletic student programming, Housing events, First Year Experience students, Louisiana Gear Up, Student Support Services and High schools events throughout Natchitoches and Winn parishes.

During FAFSA Bingo in 2017-2018 we were able to present financial aid information to well over 100 students. During the 2018-2019 FAFSA Bingo event we only had 38 students attend despite of the fact that advertising was provided well in advance of the event.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, beginning with the 2019-2020 year will collaborate with areas throughout Enrollment Management to finds ways to increase student involvement with financial aid activities.

### 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 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 not met

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of these results a survey was created in 2018-2019. However, due to time constraints from end of the spring semester activities, the financial aid knowledge questionnaire was not made available for students to complete.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results in 2019-2020 we anticipate adding additional workshop opportunities is to reflect positively on the next financial aid knowledge survey, as we strive to reach and exceed our goal of 85% accurate response rate. To achieve a greater student response, our office will provide the survey during future “FAFSA Bingo” and other financial aid sponsored events. This will allow students the ability to complete in person knowledge surveys instead and have financial aid administrators available to help answer questions that students may have.

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

**Finding:** Target not met

**Analysis:** In 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of these results, in 2018-2019 award year, we emailed 960 graduating students. We also reached out to these students, by attending Grad Fest, to let graduating student know of the final exit requirement. For the 2016-2017 year only 397 out of the 1847 (21%) students that fell below half-time status, or graduated, completed the required exit counseling. In 2017-2018 only 317 out of the 1647 (19%) students completed exit requirements. Currently, for the 2018-2019 award year only 337 of the 1594 students who have an exit counseling requirement have completed this requirement. This 21% completion rate, although up from the 2017-2018 completion rate by 2%, still falls below our goal of 75% completion rate.

**Action – Decision or Recommendation:** Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results in 2019-2020 our office will begin notifying students at the time it is determined a student needs to complete exit requirements by sending individualized emails as opposed to computer generated notices. We will create an exit counseling report to find all students who have ceased enrollment or enrolled in less than half time. We will begin running this report at the beginning of each semester, as well as throughout, to reach out to these students in a timelier manner.

**Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results:** Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results the following actions were taken to drive improvement in 2018-2019 and serve as our evidence of striving for improvement.

- Based on the comparison from 2017-2108 customer service survey, Financial Aid had an increase of 9.64% in 2018-2019 in overall satisfaction. This improvement is the result of our staff continuing to strive to improve student services and interaction with the student body. By making our office more available and more responsive through email, phone calls and face to face, we strive to make each Financial Aid experience a positive one for the student. We also believe interacting with the Financial Aid Bingo sessions have created a more positive awareness for student responsibilities regarding Financial Aid matters.

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- The Financial Aid office secured funding in 2018-2019 for nine financial aid administrators to pursue a total of 17 credentials. After failing to receive funds for the credentialing tests in the 2017-2018 year. We sought funds in a more structured and organized manner by requesting the funds through the Universities Budget Enhancement Request process. Although we were unable to receive funds for the 2018-2019 year, through this avenue, we were able to show the importance of these credentialing opportunities and how they would benefit the student and receive approval of funds for the 2019-2020 year. By securing these funds, we can obtain two separate credential certifications for nine office administrators, for a total of 18 anticipated credential certifications in the upcoming 2019-2020 year.
- The Financial Aid Office conducted five informational sessions during the fall and spring terms. Our lack of sessions in the 2017-2018 year was result of poor and hasty planning. We had a hard time finalizing dates and times with organizations across campus due to short notice request. Although our increase in 2018-2019 was small, we are continuing to learn how to make these sessions more successful and available to student organizations. We will begin planning now, more opportunities to reach out to more student organizations in the 2019-2020 year to continue to strive toward our targeted goal. Our hope is to make these sessions not only informative, but fun and entertaining, as well, so that the student will better understand the Financial Aid process and begin to see it in a more positive light.
- FAFSA Bingo Event allowed the Financial Aid Office to provide information to 37 students. We hope to keep building this event each year and making it more appealing to the student's in hopes of getting more students to attend.
- Individual email notices were sent to 960 graduating students regarding loan repayment and exit counseling requirements. During the 2018-2019 year, we realized we were mostly targeting graduating students. By creating the exit/enrollment report we hope to find those students who have ceased enrollment at the beginning, and through out the semester to begin contacting them as soon as possible, with plans to contact them regularly throughout the semester requesting the completion of the exit counseling. We anticipate an increase in completion rate as a result of these actions.

### **Plan of action:**

The Office of Student Financial Aid will encourage students to complete survey data and participation in events that is needed to increase our satisfaction rate. Each Financial Aid Administrator will have the ability to receive online training for two credentialing exams due to the approval of our Budget Enhancement Proposal Request. We will begin offering in person financial aid knowledge surveys during all Financial Aid events to allow our staff to answer any questions a student might have. Departments throughout campus will be notified of all events and services that the Office of Financial Aid could provide to help

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inform students of their Financial Aid requirements. New reports will be created to help determine students who have fallen below less than half-time enrollment and have unsatisfied exit counseling requirements at the beginning of each term to help reach students in a timelier manner.