



El Camino College Compton Community Educational Center

**FINANCIAL AID
PROGRAM REVIEW
2007**

**El Camino College Compton Center
Division of Student Services
Financial Aid Department
Program Review**

I. Overview

A. Program Profile

In August 2006 Compton Community College District lost accreditation and partnered with the El Camino College District. The Compton Community College District operates as an educational center that shares curriculum within El Camino College. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office operates according to the policies and procedures for El Camino College Financial Aid Office. These two offices run parallel operations to serve students or as closely as possible until full integration can occur at Compton Center Financial Aid Office.

The Compton Center Financial Aid Office reports directly to the Dean of Student Services at the Compton Community Educational Center and to the Director of the Financial Aid Office at El Camino College regarding administrative matters. The El Camino College Financial Aid Office operates within the Enrollment Services Division. The Enrollment Services Division reports to the office of the Vice President of Student & Community Advancement at El Camino College.

The Compton Community Educational Center Financial Aid Office disburses several million dollars in federal, state, institutional, and private aid and serves students eligible under the Federal Department of Education Titles III, IV, and V Programs. The Financial Aid Office participates in various federal financial aid programs including the Federal Pell Grant Program, Federal Supplementary Opportunity Grant (SEOG) Program, Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) Program and Federal Family Educational Loan Programs (FFELP) including the Stafford Loan Program and Parent Loan to Undergraduate Students (PLUS) Programs. The Financial Aid Office participates in various state programs including the California Grant Programs, Cal Grant B, Cal Grant C, Chaffee, Child Development, and Teacher Education Grant Programs.

Various other offices such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), CalWORKs and Student Support Program Services (SSPS) offer other federal and state financial aid to students. All financial aid given to students must be reported to and coordinated by the Financial Aid Office. Institutional financial aid awarded by the Compton Community College District Foundation and other private financial aid are reported to and coordinated by the Financial Aid Office.

Staffing – Recruitment, Training and Retaining

The El Camino College Compton Center Financial Aid Office was reduced from thirteen employees to three employees in spring 2006. Two provisional employees were added to support students and other administrative staff. A new staffing plan was developed in conjunction with Financial Aid Office employees and the new Dean of Student Services. The staffing plan

included recruiting permanent employees based on student needs and administrative requirements. The staffing plan prioritized the hires in the following order:

- 1 - Financial Aid Director
- 1 - Accounting Technician
- 2 - Program Technicians
- 1 – Program Specialist
- 1 – Financial Aid Coordinators
- 1 – User Support Technician

With the support of the Dean of Student Services, and other administrators, the District hired a Financial Aid Director, an Accounting Technician and two Program Technicians.

Providing training opportunities is a federal requirement for any Financial Aid Office. The Compton Center financial aid employees participated in training at El Camino College to familiarize themselves with the operating policies and procedures and the campus administrative computer system called Colleague. Staff also attended state workshops to learn about updates for the Cal Grant Programs. Additionally, the entire staff was sent to San Francisco to participate in the California Community College State Financial Aid Administrators (CCCSFAA) Conference and the California Association of State Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA) Conference.

Retaining qualified employees to administer financial aid programs is a challenge for every Financial Aid Office. Qualified financial aid employees are easily hired by the nearest competitor. Fortunately, Compton Center retained three senior employees of the thirteen employees that worked in the office prior to the campus downsizing. It would behoove Compton Center to ensure parity with regards to equal pay scales for the same positions in the Financial Aid Office at El Camino College. It would also be beneficial to provide as many training opportunities beyond the federal requirements as possible to help retain current employees. Also, it should be understood that good management provides equal opportunity for employees to participate in the decision-making processes.

Technology – Current Hardware & Software for Processing

The Department of Education sets minimum technology standards for hardware and software to facilitate the administration of Title IV aid. The Financial Aid Office adheres to the minimum standards so that as the Department of Education develops and uses more advanced software programs, vital administrative operations may occur without interruption. Traditionally the Board Financial Assistance Program (BFAP) funds, provided by the Chancellors Office, are used to ensure that the Financial Aid Office remains current on technology and staffing. The Financial Aid Office purchased new computers for the student Computer Lab and one additional computer for program administration.

The Financial Aid Office has struggled with old copier machines that were in disrepair and service was not readily available. Almost every day students would need to have documents photocopied and but some piece of equipment would fail. As a result of frustration, the Financial Aid Office purchased two Ricoh copiers so that business processes and customer service were made easier.

Administrative Capability – Separation of Functions

Title IV regulations mandate the separation of duties between the Financial Aid Office and the Business Office as they relate to the disbursement of Title IV aid. Essentially an institution must have different employees in different areas award, reconcile and disburse funds to students. Furthermore, administrative capability encompasses the delivery of funds to eligible students in a timely and efficient manner. This is achieved through hiring enough qualified financial aid employees to do the work otherwise productivity is slower and less efficient. The Financial Aid Office has hired an Accounting Technician and Financial Aid Director to help with separation of functions.

Also there must be a separation of functions within the Financial Aid Office. Each employee must operate within his job description to avoid potential conflicts between awarding, disbursing, and reconciling funds. This separation of function ensures administrative and program integrity and standards-of-fairness is applied equally for all students. The Security Administrator for the Financial Aid Office has established internal, administrative controls and individual security setups on the campus administrative computer system to reinforce separation of functions. Each job classification has different security class setups.

Coordinating Activities – Scholarship Office and Outreach

Currently, the Scholarship Office is part of the Foundation at the Compton Center. The Director or one of the Scholarship Office staff must act, in conjunction with the Financial Aid Office, to ensure that all financial aid awarded by the Foundation is coordinated, tracked and reported. Federal Administrative Capability Standards mandate that all aid types must be coordinated with the Financial Aid Office. At this time, the Scholarship Office is without management and no funds are being processed for students through the Foundation at the Compton Center.

Financial aid outreach has a major role in the success of the Compton Center. The number of FTES declined significantly since the State began administering campus functions. The Financial Aid Office supports many outreach events to recruit new students and retain continuing students. The staff have participated in Open House, Cash for College, Financial Aid Awareness Month and supported other offices performing outreach functions. The Financial Aid Office must continue to play a major role in all outreach efforts for the Compton Center.

Compliance – Keeping Current of Laws and Regulations

There are many ways to keep current of federal and state regulations. Probably the easiest is to use the online tools available to all financial aid professionals. There are training and data extraction tools to help the novice professional. The Federal training tools are mostly links on the website at URL www.ifap.ed.gov. The State training tools are mostly links on the websites at URL addresses on www.csac.ca.gov and www.cccsfaa.org. The financial aid staff access these websites almost daily to perform specific financial aid functions.

The staff also meets almost weekly to discuss operations, policy and procedure to assure compliance. Both the El Camino College and Compton Center campuses work together on policy and procedures, rules and system issues.

B. Status of Previous Recommendations

This is the first Program Review for the El Camino College Compton Center Financial Aid Office.

C. Continuing Recommendations

Training

Training is critical. The El Camino College Compton Center Financial Aid staff must continue to train as much as possible with staff from the El Camino College Financial Aid Office and to attend as many federal and state training opportunities as possible to maintain their financial aid skills. All training opportunities should be posted to the office operational calendar so that management is always aware of upcoming opportunities. Management should facilitate with providing institutional and categorical funds to support all training efforts.

Equipment

The Financial Aid Office replaced over one-half of the computers in the Student Computer Lab in order to have a fully functional lab. Students can continue to access the Internet to complete the federal financial aid application, and to access MyECC where a lot of information regarding all campus administrative matters is stored for student viewing. Financial aid information, billing information, address and payment information, grades and a lot of useful information is available to ease the administrative burden of the student. The equipment in the financial aid lab should be maintained and improved whenever better technology is needed.

The administrative computers in the Financial Aid Office should be replaced. The central processing unit is slow and inefficient. Although the computers do meet the minimum platform technology established by the Department of Education, the administrative computers should be replaced before the Compton Center is forced, by the Department of Education, to upgrade.

Web Development

The El Camino College Financial Aid Office shares web resources with Compton Center Financial Aid Office. The Compton Center has used a hybrid website but is ready to develop its own website. A web consultant was hired by El Camino College to develop a new, modern web site for Compton Center. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office must develop and manage the content of this new web site. The web site should mirror the same information as the El Camino College website as students from both campuses must have the same or similar resources for students.

Record Retrieval and Storage

Since becoming partners with El Camino College, the Compton Center Financial Aid Office has changed how financial aid files are set up and stored in the office. Each student has only one file but may contain multiple years of information. The files are organized:

- **Left Jacket:** Tracking documents such as Ed Plans and Transcripts.
- **Center:** Annual documents such as worksheets, award letters, tax returns all organized alphabetically and stapled together by award year.
- **Right Jacket:** Lifetime documents such as birth and marriage certificates, high school diplomas, selective service confirmations and other documents.
- **Color:** New student's files match the color of the current year FAFSA. This helps with identification and retrieval of files.
- **Academic Year:** New student files indicate the academic year on the outside of the file.

The Compton Center Financial Aid Office should purchase some lockable file cabinets to secure all financial aid files and restrict access on a need-to-know basis.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation must be a priority for the Compton Center. All funds should be reconciled with the General Accounting Office each week as they are paid. Differences must be reconciled immediately to avoid bigger problems at the end of the term. The Compton Center should continue to address this issue with the Dean of Student Services and Provost to ensure that a representative from Fiscal Services is assigned to meet with and assist with reconciliation.

Telephone System

The Compton Center Financial Aid Office relies on their telephone system. Every call should be answered and voice mail messages should be retrieved and returned. A menu system that is workable and efficient must be installed with the help of the Information and Technology Services Department.

Reporting System

A User Support Technician should be hired to write and provide reports for the administrative staff, install new software programs and update current programs, and work to customize software to meet the needs of the office.

Promote Financial Aid Campus Wide

The Compton Center Financial Aid Office should continue to promote financial aid programs campus wide and work to increase outreach activities in collaboration with other campus departments. The Community Outreach Department should continue to partner with the Financial Aid Office to do student recruiting and retention events to help the Compton Center increase FTES.

II. Program Data

A. Student/Client Satisfaction

The Financial Aid Office will develop a survey instrument to measure the effectiveness of various financial aid services including customer service, processing, program management and use of student technology to name a few. The survey should be focused mainly on financial aid services. A survey instrument could be developed later to measure the effectiveness of financial aid services with other departments on campus.

B. Student/Client Outcome Data

The Compton Center Financial Aid Office will develop a list of performance indicators and track the metrics to see how the office is operating. A sample list may include the following:

Data Collection Points

Frequency

Paper FAFSA Applications	Term
Electronic FAFSA	Term
Number of Federal Applications Processed	Term
Fee Waiver Applications	Term
Number of Fee Waivers Approved	Term
Fee Waivers Denied	Term
Federal Work Study Workshops	Term
Number of Students Visiting Lab	Monthly
Number of Phone Calls Received / Answered	Monthly
Number SAP Appeals	Term
Number SAP Appeals Processed	Term
Number of Outreach Events	Annual

C. Campus/Community Collaboration

The following collaborations have been developed and maintained on campus to improve the flow of processes in the Financial Aid Office. They include the Bursar Office, Outreach Office, CalWORKs, Student & Support Services Programs (SSPS), Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOP&S), ITS Department and Student Life Office.

1. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office has worked with the Bursar Office to develop policies and procedures for financial aid students and processes. Specifically, procedures have been written for canceling student payments from both the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Peoplesoft system and Colleague, Return to Title IV procedures regarding collection of monies returned to the Federal programs and weekly student disbursements.
2. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office has worked with the CalWORKS Department to supplement students using Federal Works Study funds to enhance student pay scales to make off-campus employment opportunities more attractive. The Financial Aid Office has also partnered with the CalWORKS Office to participate in the annual campus Career Expo / Open House.

3. The Financial Aid Office continues to partner with the Office of Outreach and Relations with Schools to assist in the recruitment of students by providing Financial Aid application workshops both on and off campus for High Schools in the area.
4. Foster Care and the Financial Aid office co-sponsored application workshops covering Chafee grants and other Financial Aid programs.
5. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office has worked with both the EOP&S and SSPS Offices in a support role providing data needed to award students in both departments. EOP&S and SSPS Offices coordinate financial aid awards either by term or on an annual basis.
6. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office has worked with ITS to create a fully functional computer lab for students, to provide a secure server for financial aid staff only and to provide web support as needed.
7. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office has worked with the Student Life Office to support a Student Ambassador Program and to assist with resolving student complaints made through that office.

Off-Campus Collaborations and the Financial Aid Office

The Compton Center Financial Aid Office participates in various recruiting efforts including grass roots events at churches, shopping centers, district high schools and fairs. A lot of these events are done in conjunction with the Outreach Office.

How can program personnel strengthen these collaborations or partnerships? Program personnel can strengthen on campus efforts by partnering with classroom faculty to educate and make students aware of financial aid opportunities. Various entry-level classes such as Human Development could include, as part of the curriculum, components of financial aid awareness and processes. Students could learn to navigate the process in a structured learning environment and earn credit at the same time.

What other collaborations or partnerships should program personnel pursue for program improvement and why? Results: An Admission & Records & Fiscal Services & ITS Monthly Forum. The Compton Center Financial Aid Office needs a forum with Admission & Records, the Business Office and the ITS Department to discuss issues affecting all three departments. A single monthly meeting could improve communication and process among the various departments. The departments would benefit but so would the students.

D. Program Data Recommendations

Instructions: Compile all program data recommendations from A – C.

No data at this time.

III. Program Requirements

A. Program Support

The Financial Aid Office needs the general accounting area to designate an employee to assist with financial aid payments and reconciliation efforts at the Center. This individual will help to reconcile accounts for the campus-based programs (Federal Work-Study Program and the SEOG Program), Federal Pell Grant Program, Return to Title IV (R2T4) and cancellations.

B. Facilities and Equipment

The Financial Aid Office administrative area is poorly constructed. The office was designed for a specific number of people instead of determining an adequate amount of workspace for each employee. The work desks are not large enough and the computers are slow and need to be replaced with a higher level of technology. There is a wooden front counter that is not student friendly because one cannot sit at the counter but has to stand to receive service. The facility needs to be painted and cluttered offices need to be cleaned up and expanded.

List of recommendations regarding facilities and equipments.

1. Remove the old front counter and create better workspaces.
2. Paint the facility to give it a modern look and feel.
3. Repair the holes in the walls and replace missing tile boards.
4. Replace the administrative computers with more modern machines.
5. Carpet the office with a commercial grade carpet.
6. Evaluate and correct all safety hazards such as missing door-knobs, electrical cords, office heaters and the air flow system in the office.
7. Provide increased privacy of information by separating lab area with advising area.

C. Staffing

The Financial Aid Office needs a Financial Aid Coordinator to assist with packaging and to administrate one of the federal or state programs. A User-Support Technician is also needed to provide technical support for the staff and Director, to complete all reporting functions for the Federal and State Governments, institution and to improve the financial aid delivery system for the office.

Personnel Trend

Personnel Type	Current Level		In 3 - 5 years		Retirement	
	# of Staffing	FTE	# of Staffing	FTE	# of Staffing	FTE
Full-time Faculty (Tenure Track)			1	1		
Full-time Faculty (Non-Tenure Track)						
Part-time Adjunct Faculty						
Full-time Classified Staff	7	7	11	11	2	2
Part-time Classified Staff (Permanent)						
Part-time Classified (Temporary)						
Casual Employees						
Student Employees	4	1	4	1		
Manager	1	1	1	1		
Supervisor						
Temporary Project Administrator						

Faculty Coordinator						
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FTE: Full Time Equivalent (i.e., 2 employees working at 50% would equal 1 FTE)

How does this data impact the program or the future of the program?

Several senior employees may retire in the next three to five years. These employees must be replaced immediately. It would be in the best interest of the department to recruit and train other employees now to replace the soon to be retirees.

The Financial Aid Office needs a User-Support Technician to provide technical support and perform some web maintenance functions on the new web site. This person would also provide reporting functions for the office and work with the Accounting Technician on program reconciliation.

Are program personnel current in their field? If not, describe what is needed to maintain currency and how it will improve the program.

Financial aid employees are supposed to attend regional meetings and workshops regularly to maintain their financial aid skills. Employees should attend segmental (CCCSFAA) meetings, State (CCCSFAA, CSAC, CASFAA) conferences, and even sometimes national (NASFAA) conference.

List and prioritize all staffing recommendations.

The Financial Aid Office staff submitted a staffing plan in 2006 as follows:

- 1 - Financial Aid Director (hired)
- 1 - Administrative Assistant (transfer)
- 2 - Program Technicians (1 hired & 1 transfer)
- 1 - Accounting Technician (hired)
- 1 - Financial Aid Coordinator
- 1 - User Support Technician
- 1 - Financial Aid Outreach Person

IV. Recommendations

1. Staffing

- a. The Financial Aid Office needs the general accounting area to designate an employee to assist with financial aid payments and reconciliation efforts at the Center. This individual will help to reconcile accounts for the campus-based programs (Federal Work-Study Program and the SEOG Program), Federal Pell Grant Program, Return to Title IV (R2T4) and cancellations.
- b. The Financial Aid Office needs a Financial Aid Coordinator to assist with packaging and to administrate one of the federal or state programs.
- c. A User-Support Technician is also needed to provide technical support for the staff and Director, to complete all reporting functions for the federal and state

governments, and institution and to improve the financial aid delivery system for the office

2. Upgrade the facilities to meet the needs of the students.
 - a. Remove the old front counter and create better workspaces.
 - b. Paint the facility to give it a modern look and feel.
 - c. Repair the holes in the walls and replace missing tile boards.
 - d. Replace the administrative computers with more modern machines.
 - e. Provide increased privacy of information by separating lab area with advising area.