EL CAMINO COLLEGE
STUDENT SERVICES
PROGRAM REVIEW 2014

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

Program Review

Program review is a tool used by program personnel to critically evaluate the services offered by the program and to recommend necessary improvements that address the needs of the college and the community.

Desired Outcomes

Desired program review outcomes include: a thorough evaluation of the program's effectiveness using quantitative and qualitative data; recommendations for program improvement (or if appropriate program discontinuance); and placement of the recommendations into the program's annual plan.

Program Description
1. **Describe the program emphasizing the program's objectives and how the program supports the college's mission and vision statements, strategic initiatives, and core competencies**.

El Camino College's Financial Aid Office is dedicated to serving our diverse community by providing college access to all students who qualify for institutional, state or federal assistance. The office is responsible for disseminating information to all students enrolled at El Camino College and ensuring that there are parallel processes in place at the Compton Education Center. The managers at both locations meet regularly to address issues of concern and to develop processes that are duplicated at both locations. It is very important to serve students respectfully and professionally, regardless of the campus where they are enrolled.

It is even more important to ensure that both locations are in compliance with federal, state and institutional regulations and mandates. El Camino College's Financial Aid Office has a responsibility to lead and support Compton Education Center in re-establishing an operation that will meet the qualifications for accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The Financial Aid Office at the Torrance campus continues to work closely with the staff at the Compton Center in discussing what processes can be run at the Center. For example, Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) calculation is done at the Torrance Campus for both locations. The Financial Aid Supervisor at the Compton Center is receiving training to fully support their office with SAP calculations, sending emails to Compton Center students and updating their files to provide a seamless tracking between both locations.

Financial Aid programs absolutely support the college's mission to offer quality, comprehensive educational programs and services to ensure the educational success of students from our diverse community. In addition, the Financial Aid Office contributes to the following strategic initiatives and core competencies.

Strategic Initiative A:
Financial Aid uses the following methods to instruct students on the process of financial aid:
- *Hands-on help in the Financial Aid Computer Lab*
- *Financial Aid Television (FATV) is a visual guide for students*
- *Students receive in-person individual assistance in the financial aid office*

Strategic Initiative B:
- *Student success is supported with timely disbursements.*

Strategic Initiative D:
- *Community partnerships are enhanced and developed through the financial aid office outreach efforts to local high schools and community organizations.*

2. Describe the student population served by the program using available data.

The Financial Aid Office is available to all prospective and enrolled students. More than half of the total student population interacts with the Financial Aid Office.
The narrative below was retrieved from the 2013 El Camino College Annual Fact Book. It validates the Financial Aid Office's metrics reports that more than 50% of El Camino College students benefit from California (state) programs.

Fifty-two percent of El Camino College students received financial aid in 2012-13, 5 percentage-points higher than the previous year. The largest Financial Aid program is the Board of Governors Fee Waiver (BOGFW). In 2012-13, there was a 4% increase in BOG Fee Waiver recipients. The second largest program is the Federal Pell Grant. The total number of Pell Grant recipients slightly decreased from 7,561 in 2011-12 to 7, 541 in 2012-13.

Two factors are generally used to determine who gets student aid and how much they get: need and merit.

- "Merit–based" aid is given to students who do something exceptionally well (like music, athletics, or academics) or to students who plan to have a career in an area that

will benefit the community or the country (like teaching, science, math, and engineering).

- "Need-based" aid is given to students who demonstrate a lack of financial resources to pay for college.

It all starts with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). With this one application, students can apply for financial aid at multiple colleges and from multiple funding sources (federal, state, institutional and private providers of assistance).

The Board of Governors Fee Waiver Program is unique to California Community Colleges and is explained below.

The Board of Governors Fee Waiver Program is for California residents, eligible AB 540 students, and eligible AB 1899 students as determined by Admissions and Records Office. The following are special classifications for BOG FW:

- Dependents of the California Department of Veterans
- Dependents of the National Guard Adjutant General
- Recipient or child of a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor
- Dependent of a victim of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack
- Dependent of deceased law enforcement/fire suppression personnel killed in the line of duty.

Here is a snapshot of the student population served by the Financial Aid Office. This data is from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Data Mart for 2012-13.

Gender
Board of Governors Fee Waiver is
Females-11,074
Males-7,290

Federal Pell Grant:
Females- 4288
Males-   3253

Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
Females-594
Males -413

Ethnicity

Pell Grants total-7,541

African-American-1,816
American Indian/Alaskan Native-13
Asian-586
Filipino-173
Hispanic-3,960
Multi-Ethnicity-251
Pacific Islander-35
Unknown-76
White, Non-Hispanic 631

 Based on the 2012-13 Financial Aid data from the Chancellor's Office, fifty-two percent of the Federal Pell Grant recipients are Hispanic. The next largest ethnic group is African-American, which is twenty-four percent of recipients.

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3. **What happens after students participate in the program's activities? If applicable, address whether students are successful in meeting their educational goals.**


Students who participate in Financial Aid Office programs and services are more successful in meeting their educational goals. Students who meet with a Financial Aid Counselor are more likely to succeed in focusing on their educational goals and completing their programs of study in a reasonable timeframe.

The data below from Institutional Research shows the success rate for students who participated in Financial Aid between Fall 2008 and Fall 2011. It shows that each Fall semester, Financial Aid students' success rate was between .4 and 2.2 percent higher than the College's.

Program   Fin Aid
Season   Fall

	Term			
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Program Success Rate*	65.6%	66.9%	68.5%	67.0%
El Camino Success Rate	63.4%	66.3%	67.0%	67.4%

Award**	Award Year			
	2008-09	**2009-10**	**2010-11**	**2011-12**
AA or AS	567	701	767	892
Certificate	150	166	223	250

Fin Aid
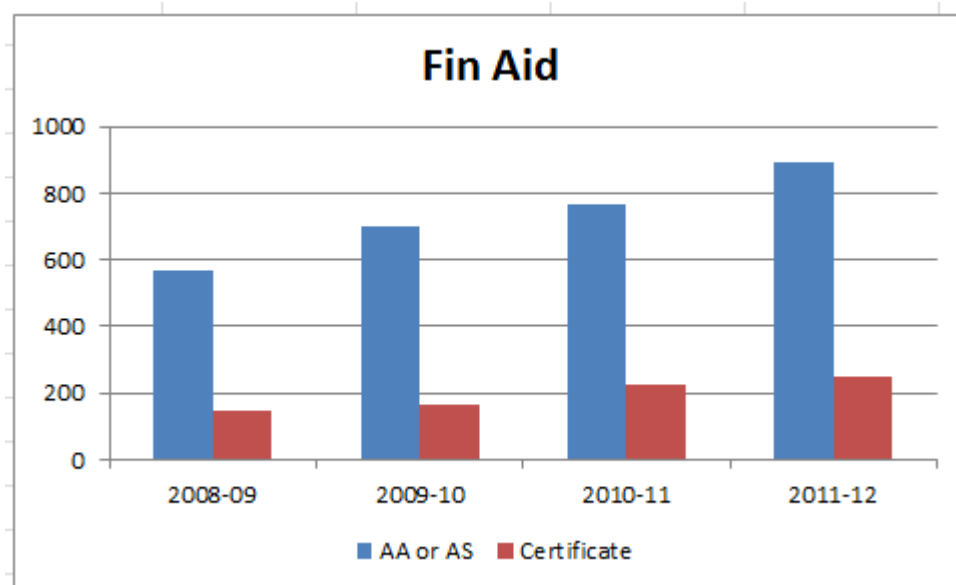
*Indicates Success rates for students involved in program during selected term.

** Indicates awards for students involved in the indicated program at any time at this location.

4. List notable achievements that were linked to the College's Strategic Initiatives that have occurred since the last program review.

The Financial Aid Office made significant improvements since the last program review. There is only an occasional complaint from a student and it is easily resolved by explaining the relevant procedure. In the past, there were numerous complaints from disgruntled students and many of them went directly to the President's Office to voice their complaint.

Students now receive their disbursements on schedule and those who lose eligibility are notified on time. The backlog in processing files was addressed by making changes to the rules that govern auto packager for Pell Grant. This resulted in a significant reduction from twelve weeks to six weeks average.

The improvements are exceptional and many students are able to purchase their books and supplies by the first week of the semester. Students who apply early and complete their files in a timely manner benefit from a more efficient operation. In the past, it took up to twelve weeks for students

to receive their disbursements. This is definitely a significant accomplishment and the long lines outside of the financial are now only during short peak times. One of the peak times is the week when students are dropped for non-payment of fees.

Students who need assistance completing their applications or checking the status of their files are assisted in the Financial Aid Computer Lab. The Financial Aid Office recognized the importance of extending the lab hours to better serve students. The Student Ambassadors were hired and trained specifically to meet the demands of the lab and they have done an excellent job assisting their fellow students.

Achievement 1: Timely disbursement of funds. In the past, it took up to twelve weeks for students to receive their first Federal Pell Grant disbursement. There were several reasons for the delay but the most common reason was that students who were not selected for verification by the Department of Education were placed in the auto-packager pool. Auto packager is explained below.

Achievement 2: More streamlined auto packager for Pell
When students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the Department of Education processor may select some students for verification. Students who are selected for verification are required to submit documentation of household size, taxable and/or untaxed income and verification worksheets signed by students and spouses (if married) or parents (dependent students). Students who are not selected for verification do not need to submit documents. If there is no conflicting information, these files are auto-packaged for Federal Pell Grant awards in addition to the Board of Governors Fee Waiver.

The auto packager rules were updated during the annual Rules Meetings in 2013. This resulted in a more efficient process and students were packaged in four weeks compared to the previous process that took twelve weeks.

Achievement 3: Reduction of processing time from twelve weeks to six weeks
See explanation for auto packager above.

Achievement 4: Frequent notification to students not meeting SAP standards
Students who do not maintain satisfactory academic progress are placed in "warning", probation or disqualification status. They are notified of their status by email. The Financial Aid Office improved the notification process and students are notified soon after grades are posted and SAP calculations are completed. It usually takes four to five weeks after the end of the semester to complete the SAP calculation.

Achievement 5: Extended hours for Financial Aid Computer Lab
Five Student Ambassadors were hired in August 2013 and trained to assist students in the Financial Aid Computer Lab. The ambassadors are highly motivated students and they are doing an exceptional job in staffing the lab. Keeping the lab open longer hours has kept the line outside of the Financial Aid Office shorter and has freed the front counter staff to concentrate on scanning documents and other duties.

Achievement 6: Financial Aid Television (FATV)
The Graduation Initiative Grant (Title V) generously paid for the licensing and other fees associated with providing Financial Aid Television (FATV). It is comprised of short videos and Frequently Asked Questions explaining the various types of federal and state aid and the application processes. This service is very popular with students and they have been using the service extensively. Students have been watching an average of five thousand videos per month since it was introduced in August 2013.

Achievement 7: Transition to Higher One Master Card Debit Cards for disbursement of Federal Financial Aid
El Camino College Financial Aid Office previously used the Refund Disbursement Service from Sallie Mae Campus Solutions. The Refund Disbursement Service provided students with a quick and easy way to receive their disbursements via a debit card, ACH or paper check.

In April 2013, Sallie Mae announced that they were merging with Higher One. The initial Discussion and plans to transition to Higher One started soon after the announcement. A Higher One transition team was formed and it is currently engaged in meetings and discussions to culminate in new disbursement options effective Fall 2014.

Achievement 8: Shorter lines of students waiting for service from the Financial Aid Office
The Financial Aid Office has much shorter lines of students waiting outside for service. The students who legitimately need to stand in line to submit documents are able to get assistance within twenty minutes. This is so much better than two years ago when some students were spending sixty minutes in line.

5.   What prior program review recommendations were not implemented, if any, and why?

PDF Interactive forms - For the past five years or more, Financial Aid Office placed high priority on providing downloadable interactive financial aid forms. The benefits of using interactive forms are:
-   Ease of access

Students can download the form directly from the Financial Aid web page and fill it using Adobe Reader software.

- Efficiency
  The downloaded forms are immediately transferred to Datatel Colleague, thereby saving time for scanning.

The reason for the delay in implementing PDF interactive forms is that Information Technology Services (ITS) is waiting to migrate to SQL before allocating resources to system changes or enhancements. Migration has been delayed for three or four years.

What was the impact on the program and the students?

The most critical impact is that students are required to submit hard copy documents to Financial Aid Office. Students are currently waiting in line for up to twenty minutes. The other impact is that the front counter staff is stretched to the limit when there is an increased demand on the limited resources.

Fortunately, students are able to get assistance in the Financial Aid Computer Lab during peak registration and other busy periods.

Equally important, the Financial Aid Office is working in collaboration with the Enrollment Services Division Office to convert all forms to the fillable PDF format. This is a step in the right direction until the interactive forms are available.

Service Area Outcomes (SAO)
1. Describe how program personnel are engaged in the creation, discussion, and review of SAO - statements, assessment results, and reports.

The Financial Aid Office identified three Service Area Outcomes. They are:
Service Area Outcome #1
90 % of Financial Aid students participating in the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) workshops during the Fall 2012 semester will demonstrate knowledge of the SAP Policy.
Service Area Outcome #2
Students attending the Satisfactory Academic Progress workshops will describe how to improve their academic progress to regain eligibility for financial aid.

Service Area Outcome #3

70% of students attending the Satisfactory Academic Progress workshops will improve their academic progress (cumulative GPA and/or completion rate) at the end of Fall 2012.

One employee coordinated with one of the Financial Aid Counselors and other staff to create and develop the SAOs for the department. There had been previous observations and discussions about the high percentage of students who did not meet satisfactory academic progress. So the team agreed that there was a need to reach out to students not meeting academic progress and eligibility requirements for financial aid. In many cases, these students were not aware of the academic policies in place to receive financial aid. The team worked with the director and a financial aid counselor to create a workshop program to inform students of the financial aid office process and policies associated with receiving financial aid including Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements. The SAOs were developed (a) to increase students' knowledge of financial aid policies, (b) to improve students' academic progress, and (c) to increase students' eligibility for financial aid.

2. How does the program ensure that SAO's are assessed consistently?

The Financial Aid office created workshops to implement the SAOs. These workshops included information on financial aid and the academic requirements to be eligible for financial aid. As students attended the workshops, data was collected through the use of surveys, evaluations, and student academic records. The results from the data was analyzed and assessed. As these workshops are implemented, data is collected to assess the department's SAOs.

3. Have the SAO assessment results indicated the need to change or modify components of the program? If so, were the changes implemented?

The assessment results indicated that the workshops were successful in helping students gain knowledge about financial aid and improving academic progress. Of the 122 students who attended workshops the first semester and completed the survey, 91% answered all 3 multiple choice questions correct regarding the SAP policy.

The Financial Aid Office made changes to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy and SAP Appeal Petition in Fall 2013. The changes included acceptable reasons for appealing SAP with appropriate documentation. There were fewer appeals submitted in 2013-14 Award Year. The Financial Aid Office will reassess the Service Area Outcomes for 2014-15 in the summer of 2014.

Program Improvement
Explain what changes need to be considered to improve the program.

1. What activities has the program engaged in to improve services to students?

1. The goal is to increase financial aid awareness and literacy in an easy, efficient and simple way. We want to get connected and stay connected with students in a current but professional method that allows them to obtain important information and take action at any time. Also, we would like to create fewer advertisement pieces that would be more precise and effective. This can be achieved by using current campus resources and incorporating social media with Quick Response Codes. Using the electronic billboards, campus kiosks, and school newspaper, we can effectively reach those in the community who are nearby or visit the campus. Through Social Media we can reach those near and far when they need the information most and are likely to be more receptive.

2. Another way of increasing awareness would be to have scheduled quarterly advertising campaigns, to keep students informed and to serve as reminders. Students, as interns, and possibly staff could submit artwork to be used in one or more campaigns during the year. This would be low cost, involve the campus and could foster relationships with students and other departments.

3. Once students have connected with Financial Aid, we want to ensure that they know what else needs to be done and their rights and responsibilities as a Financial Aid recipients. Moving the Financial Aid literature bins to the north side of Student Services Center 209 makes Financial Aid information more visible and accessible, allowing students to obtain the information and forms before standing in line. Providing students with a written copy of the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy at the time of service gives students important information and a useful guideline before embarking or continuing on their educational journey.

4. To continue meeting our students' needs it is imperative that we allow them to opportunity to tell us if what we have done is or is not working. By adding the section for comments to the Financial Aid online survey, students can give feedback as well as suggestions on how to better serve them. This helpful input would benefit future communications with students.

2. How have program personnel used metrics to improve program services? (Provide metrics from the last four years).

The Financial Aid Office gathers data from several program coordinators each semester to create metrics reports. This data includes information such as the number of FAFSAs received, the types of awards processed, and Satisfactory Academic Progress calculations showing students in good standing, on warning or on probation status. These reports are used in coordination with Program Plans to regularly assess and evaluate the program.

The metrics from the 2013 El Camino College Annual Fact Book is below. Please note that the financial aid data in the first chart labelled Financial Aid Headcount is accurate. The reason that the number of Board of Governors Waiver is greater than the total number of students served is that former reflects the number of awards or transactions completed by individual students. The latter is the unduplicated total number of students served.
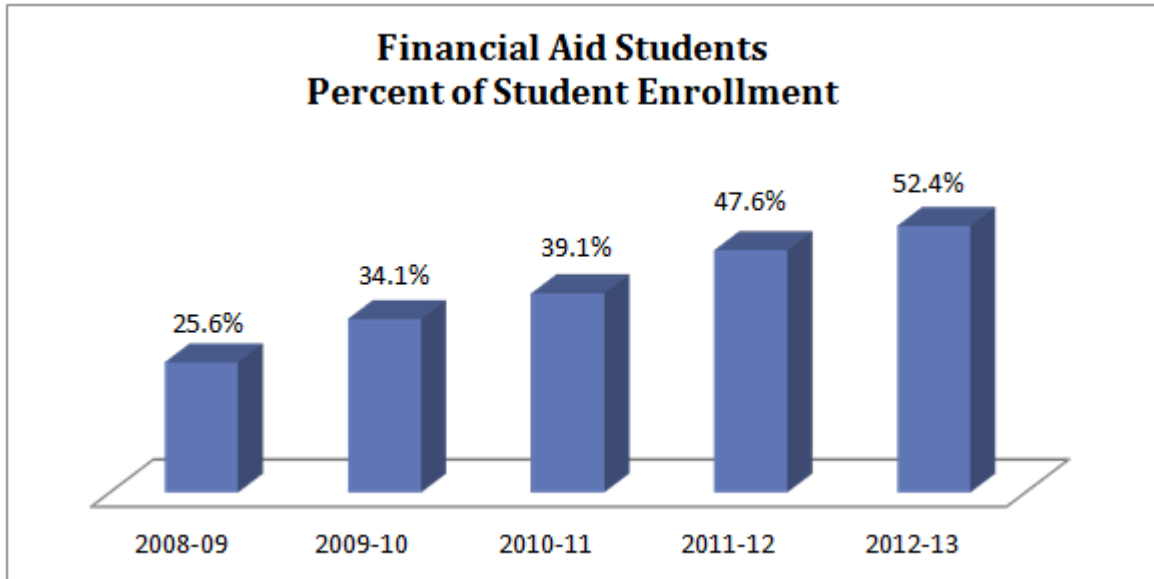
Financial Aid

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The next largest program is the Cal Grant B (CGB) and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG). In 2012-13, the number of CGB recipients increased by 10% while SEOG recipients decreased by 5%.

In the last three years, there was no Stafford Loan reported. As of 2010-11, Stafford Loans are part of the Direct Loan program and now fall under the category of Federal Direct Student Loans.

Also there are no Academic Competitiveness Grant recipients reported in 2012-13, due to the fact that this federal grant is no longer being awarded.

**Financial Aid Students
Percent of Student Enrollment**

Year	Percent
2008-09	25.6%
2009-10	34.1%
2010-11	39.1%
2011-12	47.6%
2012-13	52.4%

Financial Aid Headcount

Financial Aid	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Federal Work Study	196	223	186	209	222
Percent of Student Enrollment	*0.5%*	*0.6%*	*0.5%*	*0.6%*	*0.7%*
Osher Scholarship		18	26	28	41
Scholarship: institutional	332	217	155	117	6
Scholarship: non-institutional	55	74	108	97	160
Scholarship Total	387	309	289	242	207
Percent of Student Enrollment	*0.9%*	*0.8%*	*0.8%*	*0.7%*	*0.7%*
Stafford Loan, subsidized	433	454	0	0	0
Stafford Loan, unsubsidized	263	290	0	0	0
Federal Direct Student Loan, subsidized		3	415	467	325
Federal Direct Student Loan, unsubsidized			251	305	220
PLUS loan: parent loan for undergraduate student	0	1	0	0	0
Other loan: non-institutional source			5	8	13
Loan Total	696	748	671	780	558
Percent of Student Enrollment	*1.7%*	*1.9%*	*1.9%*	*2.4%*	*1.8%*
BOGW, Part A	1,055	1,131	1,134	1,048	831
BOGW, Part B	7,648	10,909	12,333	12,590	13,094
BOGW, Part C	3,734	4,541	4,598	4,815	5,252
Fee Waiver	24	33	38	42	45
BOGW Total	12,461	16,614	18,103	18,495	19,222
Percent of Student Enrollment	*29.9%*	*41.8%*	*51.1%*	*56.2%*	*60.6%*
Academic Competitiveness Grant	282	622	643	0	0
Cal Grant B	954	911	879	1,069	1,176
Cal Grant C	67	52	53	49	56
EOPS Grant	531	488	354	476	568
CARE Grant	156	104	146	94	92
Chafee Grant	43	45	47	46	39
Pell Grant	4,636	5,695	6,160	7,561	7,541
SEOG (Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)	611	710	853	1,059	1,007
Grant Total	6,998	8,005	8,492	10,354	10,479
Percent of Student Enrollment	*16.8%*	*20.1%*	*24.0%*	*31.5%*	*33.0%*
Grand Total	20,738	25,899	27,741	30,080	30,688
Unduplicated Student Total	10,655	13,542	13,846	15,661	16,623
Percent of Student Enrollment	*25.6%*	*34.1%*	*39.1%*	*47.6%*	*52.4%*

Financial Aid Recepients Percent of Enrollment

Financial Aid and Scholarship Award Amounts
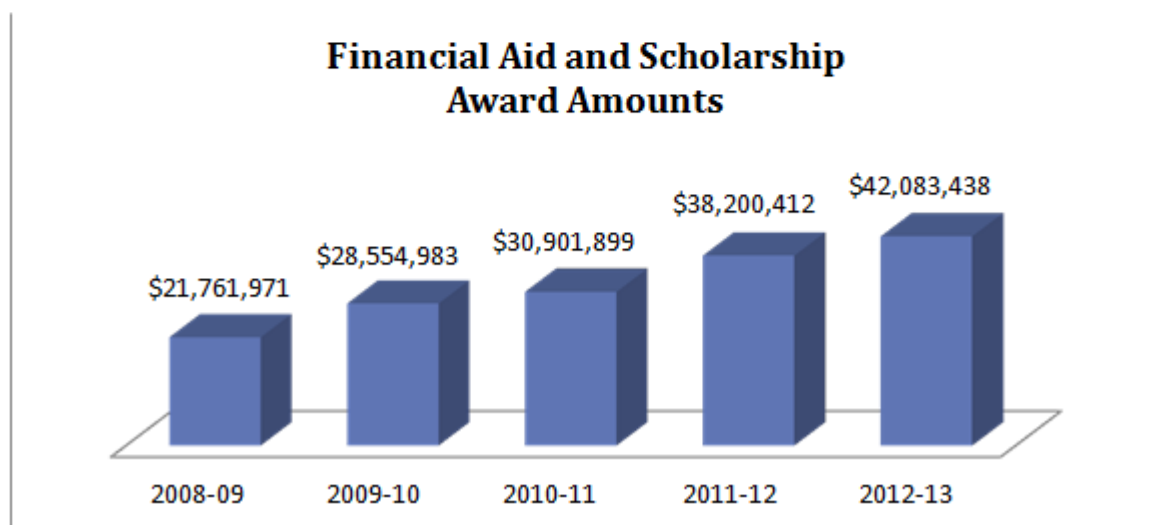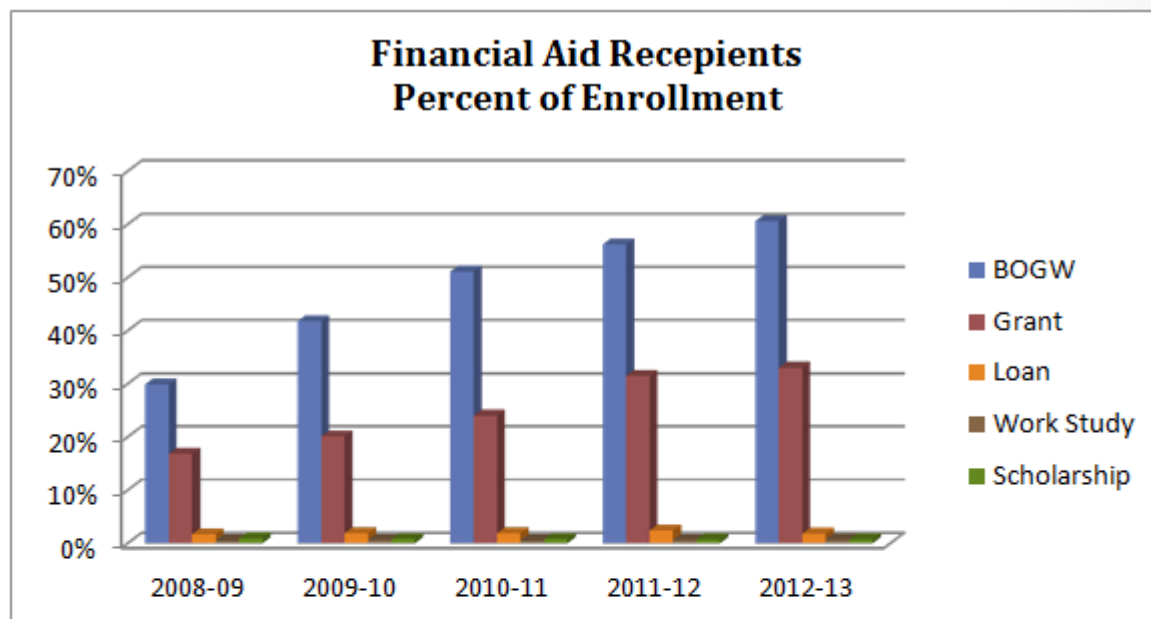
Average Financial Aid Amount Awarded to Students

Financial Aid	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Federal Work Study	$2,034.30	$1,975.00	$2,228.94	$2,169.53	$1,770.46
Scholarships	$950.95	$849.11	$856.54	$903.25	$924.23
Loans	$3,386.45	$3,365.92	$3,390.22	$3,292.47	$3,440.00
BOGW	$316.32	$360.69	$374.86	$544.50	$724.73
Grants	$2,100.11	$2,416.24	$2,493.99	$2,403.87	$2,447.64
Overall Average	*$1,049.38*	*$1,102.55*	*$1,113.94*	*$1,269.96*	*$1,371.33*

Financial Aid Amount Awarded 2008-2013

Financial Aid	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Federal Work Study	$398,723	$440,426	$414,582	$453,432	$393,042
Osher Scholarship		$16,250	$24,000	$28,000	$6,912
Scholarship: institutional	$312,236	$187,637	$124,530	$97,500	$8,250
Scholarship: non-institutional	$55,783	$58,488	$99,009	$93,086	$183,069
Scholarship Total	*$368,019*	*$262,375*	*$247,539*	*$218,586*	*$191,319*
Stafford Loan, subsidized	$1,440,498	$1,507,139	$0	$0	$0
Stafford Loan, unsubsidized	$916,470	$996,068	$0	$0	$0
Federal Direct Student Loan, subsidized		$7,629	$1,372,015	$1,052,191	$1,077,868
Federal Direct Student Loan, unsubsidized			$865,759	$1,472,739	$777,431
PLUS loan:	$0	$6,870	$0	$0	$0
Other loan: non-institutional source			$37,063	$43,200	$64,221
Loan Total	*$2,356,968*	*$2,517,706*	*$2,274,837*	*$2,568,130*	*$1,919,520*
BOGW, Part A	$349,840	$449,357	$464,113	$640,960	$1,148,044
BOGW, Part B	$2,425,830	$3,937,828	$4,586,556	$6,830,524	$9,116,740
BOGW, Part C	$1,154,804	$1,583,844	$1,710,224	$2,563,303	$3,659,921
Fee Waiver	$11,200	$21,467	$25,116	$35,784	$6,000
BOGW Total	*$3,941,674*	*$5,992,496*	*$6,786,009*	*$10,070,571*	*$13,930,705*
Academic Competitiveness Grant	$171,303	$359,815	$366,540	$0	$0
Cal Grant B	$1,159,391	$1,078,633	$1,014,005	$1,218,713	$1,297,336
Cal Grant C	$22,896	$18,216	$20,808	$18,648	$19,714
EOPS Grant	$189,064	$202,215	$110,104	$171,867	$212,377
CARE Grant	$55,216	$83,761	$78,500	$53,140	$58,223
Chafee Grant	$190,796	$162,302	$203,594	$162,783	$136,750
Pell Grant	12,755,224	17,445,253	19,314,353	$22,800,142	$23,421,052
SEOG (Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)	$324,000	$351,600	$437,568	$464,400	$503,400
Grant Total	*$14,696,587*	*$19,341,980*	*$21,178,932*	*$24,889,693*	*$25,648,852*
Grand Total	*$21,761,971*	*$28,554,983*	*$30,901,899*	*$38,200,412*	*$42,083,438*

3. **If applicable, explain any patterns in student success, retention, and persistence in terms of student characteristics and program objectives and discuss planned responses or changes.**

Community college students are taking out more student loans now and the two-year cohort default rates are on the rise. This trend is concerning for various reasons. First, the current two-year CDR calculation makes it impossible to differentiate between the amount borrowed at a community college and the amount borrowed over the course of a college career. Many community college students transfer in from other institutions where they have accumulated student loan debt. A student who transfers from a university to a community college acquires additional loan debts and later defaults is now automatically a part of the last college's default rate.

Secondly, students who were on financial aid probation were eligible for grants and loans during their probationary semester. Many of these students also took out student loans and lost eligibility for Title IV in subsequent semesters. These students who are already at risk are more likely to withdraw from classes while earning low wages that are insufficient to pay their debts, which results in defaulted student loans.

Thirdly, the cost of education is relatively low at a California Community College so students can afford a college education without the additional burden of student loan debt. It appears that many students are borrowing to cover living expenses.

El Camino College took all these practices into consideration and decided to withdraw from participating in the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan program in April, 2013. This change was effective July 1, 2013 for the 2013-14 award year.

El Camino College's three –year cohort default rate (CDR) for the past three years is:
19.4 % for 2009
25.6 % for 2010
20.7% (draft) for 2011.

The implications for a default rate exceeding 30 percent are devastating for an institution. Institutions that have a 3-year Cohort Default Rate of 30 percent or greater for any one federal fiscal year is required to establish a Default Prevention Task Force to reduce defaults and prevent the loss of institutional eligibility. (34 CFR 668.217)
An institution will lose its eligibility to participate in all Title IV if its CDR is 30 percent or greater for three consecutive federal fiscal years.

 Students and the campus community were notified of the of the 2013-14 processing changes, including withdrawal from the Federal Direct Loans, several months before the start of the 2013-14 award year.

Program Environment

1. **Discuss the program environment, including the relationship among program staff and students and involvement with other programs or support areas.**

The relationship among staff members has improved significantly in the past year. Much of the discontent and poor communication in the past was the result of frustration from the long lines of students outside the Financial Aid Office. This was exacerbated by system failures and shortcomings. Many students frequented the office in search of answers regarding their disbursements and the front counter staff was running out of answers.

Now that the office has streamlined the Auto -packager process for students who are not selected for verification, the disbursement of funds to eligible students has been shortened to approximately four weeks. Prior to this time, frustration was evident on the student side and the front counter staff. Even though they were empathetic, they also felt the frustration.

The next step is improving communication through specialized training, accountability and written operations procedures. The managers at the Torrance campus and Compton Educational Center are developing a written Operations Policies and Procedures Manual to present at the upcoming Financial Aid Training scheduled on April 25, 2014. The staff from both locations will participate in this day of training and building better working relationships between the two offices.

The physical environment of the office continues to be a challenge for several years. It escalated much higher a year ago when an irate student scaled the counter and physically threatened a manager. Many of the front counter staff are still traumatized by this unfortunate incident and are looking to the District for a resolution. The front counter remodel was proposed for this semester but it was later cancelled. In the meantime, the front counter employees are doing the best that they can under the circumstances, but they are very disappointed in the response to their requests for a safer work environment.

The Dean of Enrollment Services Division and Financial Aid Office managers are collaborating with the managers in other student support areas to improve overall services and more timely financial aid disbursements to students. The managers meet at least quarterly with Admissions and Records, and Fiscal Services to address common concerns and areas for improvement. In the final analysis, everyone must communicate and collaborate in order for us to achieve these goals.

2. **Describe the number and type of staff and faculty (include current organizational chart).**

The Financial Aid Office consists of 21 employees, including a vacant position to be filled by May 1, 2014. Please see attached organizational chart.

3. **Describe facilities or equipment needs for the next four years.**

The Financial Aid Office operation is in dire need of a more modern and efficient facility to improve working conditions for employees. The current space occupied by Financial Aid was previously classroom space that was later converted to office space. The end result is that the space does not meet the needs of a program that is growing each year. Furthermore, modern equipment and technology needs are lacking so the program personnel are forced to endure manual processes to fill the void.

The managers are taking advantage of opportunities to communicate the need to accommodate program growth and technical support for the next four years. These include a much larger computer lab where students will learn to navigate the electronic processes and online communication with the U.S. Department of Education and other entities.

There will always be students who prefer to meet with Financial Aid personnel to discuss their options and programs or services. Therefore, the office will always need to provide facilities and equipment that meet industry standards. The primary needs for students and staff are privacy, safety, Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance and ergonomic standards.

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4. Describe how well the scheduled hours of availability meet student demand and indicate the specific hours the program operates.

The Financial Aid Office hours of operation are as follows:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday- 9 am to 5:30 pm
Wednesday-9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Friday- 9 am to 12:30 pm

The Financial Aid Computer Lab hours are:
Monday, Wednesday- 9 to 11 am and 2:30 to 5:30 pm
Tuesday, Thursday -11am to 5:30
Friday- 9 am to 12:30 pm

The hours of operation are in coordination with other Student Services Departments, namely Admissions and Records, Counseling, Outreach and School Relations and Assessment Center. The purpose of coordinating the hours is to accommodate the needs of students in such areas as enrollment, testing, counseling and paying fees.

In addition to the regular hours of operation, the Financial Aid Office offers email communication with the office via ECCFAID. The Enrollment Services Manager is doing an excellent job responding to students' email and inquiries. This service is also a factor in reducing the number of students who stand in line outside of the Financial Aid Office.

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5. Describe the influences that external factors such as state laws, changing demographics, and the characteristics of the students served have on the program and services and how the program addresses these factors.

As El Camino College gears up for implementation of the Student Success Act (SB 1456), the Financial Aid Office is affected by a variety of internal mandates and processes. The following recommendations have a significant impact on the Financial Aid Office:

    1. Every matriculating student needs an education plan.

The education plan requirement is not new to El Camino College's Financial Aid Office. This has always been an integral component of qualifying for federal aid. The impact will be coordinating this requirement with the other stakeholders so students are not duplicating the effort or creating conflicting data.

    2. Need for more counselors.

The Financial Aid Office is reviewing the counseling needs with the full-time financial aid counselors. The discussion started in Spring 2013 when both entities made significant changes to the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy, specifically the 150% of program component. As a result of this new calculation, there is a significant reduction in the number of students who need a Lock in List. In addition, reducing counseling appointments to one half hour, mandating that staff only make appointments at a student's request, and restricting the allowable circumstances for financial aid appeals has significantly decreased the number of financial aid counseling appointments that are needed both during peak and non-peak times. As a result, the financial aid counselors have been seeing far more students with general counseling needs, and no adjunct support has been needed during the Fall 2013 or Spring 2014.

The second state law that significantly impacted the Financial Aid Office workload is California Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540). AB 540 authorized community college districts to "*admit and charge a tuition fee for nonresident students in accordance with specified criteria.*" AB 540 allows an exception from paying non-resident tuition to any student who attended a high school in California or attained the equivalent prior to the start of the term.

As a result of these California laws, more students qualified for state financial aid. The financial Aid Office, in collaboration with the Admissions Office, successfully implemented AB 540 to assist more students who could not otherwise afford to attend college.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Present a brief summary of the program's strengths and areas for improvement. List all recommendations in a prioritized manner for subsequent placement into the program's annual plan.

1. Summarize the program's strength and areas that need improvement.

The Financial Aid Office has received much needed support from El Camino College's administration in the area of staffing. The office is fully staffed and able to meet the needs of the growing applicant pool. The staff is currently being cross-trained to be able to cover specialized functions when regularly assigned staffs are out for short or extended periods.

The office did an exceptional job in getting systems and services in place for an earlier start in Spring 2014. Students who were eligible for aid received a disbursement the first week of the spring semester. The staff must also be commended for sending email notifications to students who were ineligible for aid due to Satisfactory Academic Progress deficiencies. This was a major accomplishment since there was a shorter processing time between the end of fall and start of spring semesters.

The most significant improvement is that students no longer need to endure standing in line for an hour or longer. There are still lines during peak processing times, especially the week of dropping for non-payment of fees, Students who follow instructions and complete their files early, however, are not subject to long lines or delayed disbursement of funds. The office is taking customer service up a notch by implementing priority processing effective Fall 2014. Students who complete their files by June 1st and meet all eligibility requirements will receive their disbursement by the first week of the semester.

The areas for improvement include:
1. Continuous team-building between the El Camino Torrance campus and Compton Education Center.
   The managers from both campuses meet monthly with the Dean of Enrollment Services to discuss common concerns and improvements for the delivery of Financial Aid. There are also unique challenges to each campus but, in most cases, the managers can develop resolutions that will be beneficial to all parties.

2. Increasing staff training and updating all training manuals for easy access
   The managers are increasing staff training at both locations. It is very important to update training manuals for staff to share. The 2014-15 Policies and Procedures Manual is a more comprehensive training manual and is currently available on the "Drive at El Camino College. It will be available on the "O" drive at Compton Center by early May 15, 2014.

List prioritized recommendations. (Provide proposed organizational chart if appropriate).

1. Automate calculation of 150% timeframe of students' program of study.

The Financial Aid Office is currently identifying the necessary components to automate the calculation of 150% of each certificate program that is listed on the Program Participation Agreement from the U. S. Department of Education. These programs are approved for Federal Financial Aid and are the only certificate programs for which students should receive aid.

2.   Improve Financial Aid Office facility to enhance student and staff morale and safety. The front counter of the Financial Aid Office was remodeled twice since the last program review. The improvements have been kept to a minimum because a new Student Services Center will be constructed within the next five years.

2.   __x_   Continue Program

___   Discontinue Program (Explain how the program's services could be handled by other services on campus if the program has been declining or is no longer fully utilized.)

Attachments:

Financial Aid Office Organizational Chart

Revised: 5/5/2010, 3/13/2013