Council for the Advancement of Standards in
Higher Education

Financial Aid Programs
Final Report

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CAS Program Review and Self-Assessment
Final Report

Executive Summary of Review Process

On November 5, 2020 the Self-Assessment process developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) organization was introduced to the Student Services Planning and Budget Team (SSPBT). Subsequent to the November 5th meeting, SSPBT approved the CAS standards for use as a replacement of the previous comprehensive program review. The CAS self-assessment guides (SAG) were chosen by each team leader as the appropriate tool to assess the programs /function within each department. The SAG consists of standards and guidelines used to evaluate the strengths and deficiencies of each Program and to plan for improvement opportunities within the De Anza College Student Services Division.

The CAS Standards and Guidelines consist of twelve Parts used for the review of each program/service area:

Part 1: Mission
Part 2: Program and Services
Part 3: Student Learning, Development, and Success
Part 4: Assessment
Part 5: Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Part 6: Leadership, Management, and Supervision
Part 7: Human Resources
Part 8: Collaboration and Communication
Part 9: Ethics, Law and Policy
Part 10: Financial Resources
Part 11: Technology
Part 12: Facilities and Infrastructure

The review team for (Financial Aid) consisted of (4) members. Members were recommended by the Student Development office.

Team Member Name	Team Member Title
Gary Valentine	Financial Aid Supervisor
Thao Nguyen	Financial Aid Coordinator
Mayra Godoy-Rodriguez	Financial Aid Coordinator
Claudia Ruelas	Financial Aid Coordinator

All CAS review team members were given training for the CAS review and provided with an Office365 Folder consisting of the following:

- A list of recommended documents to be gathered as evidence as a part of the self-assessment process.
- An electronic folder containing subfolders for storing evidence for each of the twelve parts.
- A copy of the Self-Assessment Guides (SAG) for the program/service area being assessed.
- A copy of the functional area guide which clearly outlines the components for each part of the standards.

During the team meetings, the CAS Committee organized discussion around pre-identified rating discrepancies, open-ended questions as evidenced at the end of each section, and any other issues the Committee felt needed further discussion. Strengths, opportunities for growth, and action steps were also identified at each meeting for each section.

The following rating scale was used during the assessment.

CAS Raters Definitions
- DNA - Does not apply
- IE – Insufficient Evidence/Unable to rate
- 0 – Does not meet
- 1 - Partially Met
- 2 - Meets
- 3 - Exceeds

Summary of Initial Findings

Conclusions*:*
This section will be completed at the very end.

Meaningful limitations to completion of the program review*:*

Summaries

The following pages represent the Review Committee's collective responses and serves as the initial report.

Overall Section Average Scores

Section 1: Mission (2)

Section 2: Program and Services (1.5)

Section 3: Student Learning, Development, and Success (1)

Section 4: Assessment (1.5)

Section 5: Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (2)

Section 6: Leadership, Management, and Supervision (1)

Section 7: Human Resources (1.5)

Section 8: Collaboration and Communication (1.5)

Section 9: Ethics, Law and Policy (1.5)

Section 10: Financial Resources (1.5)

Section 11: Technology (1)

Section 12: Facilities and Infrastructure (1.5)

<h1 style="text-align:center">Section 1: Mission</h1>

CAS Section 1 Purpose Summary

The mission of Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must be to develop, review, and disseminate financial resources and information to students to assist them in achieving their educational goals from pre-enrollment through graduation.

Section 1 Committee Summary – Average rating (2)
We are committed to providing services and support, raising awareness of financial aid availability and eligibility to students to ensure they reach their educational goals. We strive to encourage student success for each individual student.

Achievements
Our financial aid office has increased our access and availability to serve students. We offer both in-person and Zoom services. We help right away, we provide equity to students, and we advocate to students to other departments with resources. The mission is used to a great extent in practice to fulfill the needs of everyone.

Opportunities for Growth
Reduce the number of complaints, reduce wait time on file review/completion from 5-7 working days to 2-3 days. Promote staff awareness and frequent training to stay up to date with Federal regulations to provide accurate information to students.

Action Steps
Objective: Reduce wait time on file review
Key Result: Verification leniency was implemented so a thorough file review was no longer required
Activities: Briefly review files to look for fraud patterns. If none, complete file
Encourage students to complete FAFSA and DREAM APP application

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Section 2: Program and Services</h1>

CAS Section 2 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must be guided by a set of written goals and objectives that are directly related to the stated mission. The FAP goals must be aligned with institutional priorities and expectations of the functional area. FAP goals must be consistent with the mission, goals, policies, procedures, and characteristics of the institution and compatible with the ability of the institution to provide adequate resources to meet the needs and educational goals of students.

Section 2 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)
Increase De Anza student file completion rate by 10% each year until 100% is achieved. Reach out to students on a regular basis prior to the award year closing.

Achievements
We have implemented processes to be more efficient with financial aid awarding to eliminate manual work, which is beneficial to students receiving their aid. Scheduled automated emails/texts messages to students

Opportunities for Growth
More collaboration with other departments
Accuracy and timeliness regarding file review
Respond to student emails in a timely manner and provide accurate information
Phone calls to students

Action Steps
Objective: Increase more Pell Grant, CCPG recipients
Key Result: Increase communication with students, connect with learning communities, connect with programs on campus
Activities: Provide informative FAFSA workshops, provide classroom presentations, increase on and off campus outreach

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 3: Student Learning, Development, and Success

CAS Section 3 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must contribute to students' formal education, which includes both curricular and co-curricular experiences. FAP must contribute to students' progression and timely completion of educational goals. FAP must assist students by addressing financial issues that may serve as barriers to enrollment and the achievement of educational goals.

Section 3 Committee Summary – Average rating (1)
Our office has become more accessible and adapted to meet our students' needs for them to succeed in their higher education. Accessibility has always been a key component within our office, but due to the hybrid transition, we've constructed a new learning and development model.

Achievements
Reducing the level of financial stress on students. Provide financial aid knowledge to help them when they transfer to another university. Students are receiving work experience through the Federal Work Study and Student employment programs offered.

Opportunities for Growth
Simplify the application process while staying within the Federal guidelines. Create more job opportunities for students.

Action Steps
Objective: We want to encourage students to advocate for themselves, be self-reliant with the tools we provide when they transition to another university. We provide a comfortable environment for students.
Key Result: To build confidence within each student regarding financial aid applications, process and resources, to apply on their own.
Activities: As a staff, we are more hands on with students, provide Zoom meetings, provide financial aid overview workshops.

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 4: Assessment

CAS Section 4 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must develop assessment plans and processes that document progress toward achievement of mission, goals, outcomes, and objectives. FAP must design assessment plans that incorporate an ongoing cycle of assessment activities.

Section 4 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)

As an office, we take accountability that social media is a focal point going forward, which we need to improve and grow. Our aim is to improve technology usage.

Achievements
The financial aid office has used financial aid data to improve delivery of programs, workshops, virtual and in-person office hours, and improved the student employment process. FAP monitors improvements implemented based on assessment results and applies results for future planning

Opportunities for Growth
Increase our office participation in offered training and conferences. Utilize the chatbot on our website more often. Increase marketing, making improvements to our website. To expand more with our social media outreach in terms of posting financial aid opportunities, Cal Grant (March 2nd) application deadline

Action Steps
Objective: Bridge the gap with Gen Z or even millennials to learn new methods for completing financial aid
Key Result: Emphasize new creative methods
Activities: Meet or collaborate more with marketing

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 5: Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

CAS Section 5 Purpose Summary

Within the context of each institution's mission and in accordance with institutional policies and applicable codes and laws, Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must create and maintain educational and work environments for students, faculty, staff, administrators, designated clients, and other constituents that are welcoming, accessible, inclusive, equitable, and free from bias or harassment.

Section 5 Committee Summary – Average rating (2)

We have achieved being more accessible to students. However, we have come to an understanding that it's important that we have a written manual process for each role put in place. This would help us better serve our students. It is vital we provide cross-training to expand our knowledge within our office, which will provide immediate solutions to our students in a timely matter.

Achievements
The De Anza financial aid office has provided access, equity and inclusion by removing many barriers over the years. We have adapted and become more accessible for our students via Zoom and in-person. In addition, the entire financial aid process can be completed online or in-person. We work proactively to avoid any barriers when serving our students. The financial aid office provides inclusion among our diverse population as it is vital that we make our office accessible to provide clear leadership and support.

Opportunities for Growth
As a department, we would like to improve within our team to have a written manual that includes all procedures/roles within our office.

Action Steps
Objective: As a team, we are adapting to become more accessible to our students to meet their needs. In addition, as an office, we would like to create a policy and procedure manual.
Key Results: Providing cross-training opportunities for staff to grow outside their roles and become financial aid experts who excel in providing support to our diverse population within Financial Aid.

Activities: Using Office 365 to create a handbook, making it accessible for everyone to obtain. Providing zoom drop-in hours and additional one-on-one zoom meets, share screen, emails, phone calls and in-person.

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 6: Leadership, Management, and Supervision

CAS Section 6 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) leaders must model ethical behavior and demonstrate alignment with institutional mission, goals, and ethical practices. Leaders with organizational authority for FAP must provide management and supervision as well as lead strategic planning and program advancement.

Section 6 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)

As employees working within student services, it is our duty to take accountability to learn and adapt in ways that best serve our students. When opportunities for training, cross-collaboration and activities are offered, we should have greater participation to advance individual knowledge, so that we are able to deliver precise and accurate information. This will eliminate the inconvenience of students having to visit the office or our Zoom drop-in hours multiple times to get the correct information/answers.

Achievements
Financial aid leadership plans for advancements or sets the pace in the department mission to ensure successful achievement. Professional development opportunities are offered, easy access to management and weekly meetings. Communication is key to empowering good personnel. They also demonstrate accountability by sharing information and knowledge that will help others know how to practice good behaviors.

Opportunities for Growth
Schedule more consistent staff meetings to discuss new Federal guidelines, new processes, etc.
Need to fill vacant positions

Action Steps
Objective: Our objective is to create a strong dynamic within our team where we have rapport, challenges and efficiency
Key results: having everyone provide accurate/consistent information to students
Activities: sharing what we learned from training in staff meetings. When a new Federal update or change is released, schedule a meeting to discuss it so everyone understands and is on the same page

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 7: Human Resources

CAS Section 7 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must identify the level of staffing necessary to achieve its mission and goals. FAP must be staffed by individuals qualified to accomplish its mission and goals. Personnel include full-time and/or part-time faculty, staff, administrators, and paraprofessionals (e.g., student employees, interns, graduate assistants, and volunteers).

Section 7 Committee Summary – Average rating (1)

Professional development opportunities are offered to increase the knowledge base of the financial staff to potentially be qualified for promotion when an opportunity arises

Achievements
A few of us have been nominated for state awards to acknowledge our exemplary performances.
Offer training and develop staff.
Promotion from within the financial aid staff
Encourage staff to attend campus professional development courses, online training, conferences, etc.

Opportunities for Growth
The financial aid office is not strong on performance evaluation.

Action Steps
Objective: continue to offer professional development training and promotion from within staff. Fill vacancies or hire student employees to assist.
Key Results: staff will gain more knowledge to perform their job duties effectively
Activities: hiring new staff when there is a vacancy, attending conferences

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 8: Collaboration and Communication

CAS Section 8 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) personnel must collaborate and consult with institutional leaders, faculty, individuals, and departments essential to the success of the program.

Section 8 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)

Collaboration with other departments and creating relationships is key to student success.

Achievements
We have collaborated and built a strong relationship with other departments to ensure we are providing accurate information and we are all on the same page on updates

Opportunities for Growth
Designate a person to create a "one-stop system" within all student services. This will be effective in avoiding having a student visit multiple offices to obtain basic information

Action Steps
Objective: to continue to build strong relationships with other departments or new staff that is hired
Key Results: to have clear communication to provide correct information regarding each department
Activities: schedule joint meetings or activities with other departments – meet and greet. Create a master one-drive document so student services can share updates, deadlines, etc.

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 9: Ethics, Law and Policy

CAS Section 9 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must review and adopt appropriate standards of ethical practice including those of applicable professional associations. FAP must comply with laws, regulations, policies, and procedures that relate to its respective responsibilities and that pose legal obligations, limitations, risks, and liabilities for the institution as a whole.

Section 9 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)

Ethical decisions generate and sustain trust, demonstrate respect, responsibilities, and fairness. This provides a foundation for making better decisions

Achievements

As a staff we follow and understand the Federal and State rules and regulations and do not disclose any personal/private information. Ethical decisions generate and sustain trust, demonstrate respect, responsibilities, and fairness. This provides a foundation for making better decisions.

Opportunities for Growth

Having staff familiarize themselves with how to navigate the Federal Student AID (FSA) handbook. Having staff take accountability on their own to know how to search for solutions on their own when issues arise, and to ensure we comply with all regulations.

Action Steps

Objective: have a foundation for making better decisions. Have staff navigate and make ethical decisions that generate and sustain trust, demonstrate respect, be responsible and provide fairness.
Key Results: eliminating errors so we have no audit findings, being consistent and concurrent with relaying information to students and other staff
Activities: We attend training by FSA (Federal Student Aid) personnel regarding verification and awarding financial aid. We are encouraged to read and refer to the FSA handbook, we attend conferences (CAFSAA, CCCSFAAA, NASFAAA, WASFAAA, FSA, Ellucian, Campus Logic).

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 10: Financial Resources

CAS Section 10 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must have the funding that is necessary to accomplish its mission and goals. FAP must determine with administrative leadership what funding is necessary.

Section 10 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)

The funding is vital for our office to be successful in serving students. Although the staff has taken on extra duties due to the in-balance ratio of staff to students, we have managed to continue to provide the best service possible.

Achievements

We have been working with a funding shortfall for a few years, and we have been seeing the wear on certain members of the team, especially the director, as more and more job duties are given, but we have found ways to make it work.

Opportunities for Growth
We have decreased BFAP funds and campus funding. This strategy is unsustainable, as we do not have funds to cover our expenses and personnel to be fully staffed

Action Steps
Objective: Increase our BFAP resources, however, with the decrease in enrollment, this is difficult, but we will assist students as best as we can with limited resources.
Key Results: the more Pell Grant, CCPG awards students receive, the more funding the financial aid office will receive
Activities: Reach out to students to complete FAFSA/Dream Applications to maximize their eligibility

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 11: Technology

CAS Section 11 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) must have current technology to support the achievement of its mission and goals. FAP must incorporate accessibility features into technology-based programs and services. FAP must ensure that personnel and constituents have access to training and support for technology use. FAP must back up data on a cycle established in partnership with the institution's information technology department. FAP must implement a replacement plan and cycle for all technology with attention to sustainability.

Section 11 Committee Summary – Average rating (1)

Co-adapting to the newer and younger generation has opened a hybrid model where we are able to assist without the physical presence of a student. As we work with a population of students who come from different social and economic backgrounds, we have adapted to provide student services outside of the norm of 8-5 p.m.

Achievements
Technology has helped us to go paperless, and through the pandemic helped us to smoothly transition to remote work. Our students no longer need to drop paperwork in at the office, they now upload it to their account online. We now have our services available to them online, and students do not need to come to campus to see us. The transition from desktops to laptops has made it easier for us to work both in-person and remotely.

Opportunities for Growth
When researching and working with other campuses, and from reviewing past practices, a data analyst (IT) staff member was assigned to financial aid for all technical advances/issues. It is vital that this person is needed to create a new model for serving our students to be more precise or efficient. This would eliminate a lot of manual work and errors for the staff.

Action Steps
Objective: to fill the vacant position or hire a consultant on a contractual basis. To continue to improve our hybrid model in relation to serving students.
Key Results: Co-adapting to the older and newer generation of students.
Activities: statistics, data on awarding. Creating Pop Sels, batch processes, etc. Award more financial aid in mass to help with department budget/funding.

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.

Section 12: Facilities and Infrastructure

CAS Section 12 Purpose Summary

Financial Aid Programs (FAP) facilities must be located in suitable spaces designed to support the functional area's mission and goals. FAP facilities must be intentionally designed to engage various constituents, promote learning, and provide accessible and safe spaces. FAP facilities must be designed to protect the security and privacy of records and ensure the confidentiality of sensitive information and conversations. FAP must incorporate universal design principles. FAP facilities must be designed and constructed to be energy-efficient and sustainable.

Section 12 Committee Summary – Average rating (1.5)

We have adapted our office to provide a good layout and space, which helps employees' productivity so that the workspace is functional, efficient, with flexible space allocation options.

Opportunities for Growth
In our building (Baldwin Winery) temperature control needs to be improved (it's very cold during winter)
No restroom in our building
In the event of an emergency, exit routes are limited

Achievements
Our office was renovated approximately 4-5 years ago. Our new office space improved the culture and was designed to be student friendly. We continue to notice it's student friendly and has improved the office environment for the financial aid team. Also, a new banner was installed to make our office more visible to students.

Action Steps
Objective: To make our office more student welcoming
Key Results: The office re-design improved employee workspace. Meeting with students offers a little more privacy than before. The office environment overall improves student service.
Activities: Office was completely remodeled. Banners were installed.

A detailed description of objectives, key results, activities, responsible persons, and timelines are included in Appendix A: Objectives and Key Results Worksheet.