Non-Instructional Annual Review
Financial Aid

This document addresses the following SACSCOC requirements: CR 2.5, CS 3.3.1, and CS 3.5.1, CR 3.9.2, CR 3.13.3, and FR 4.5

Purpose

Amarillo College non-instructional area's consistently review data and strive for improvement. The purpose of this review is to demonstrate how AC non-instructional areas support AC's mission by "…*enriching the lives of our students and our community.*"

On an annual basis, the Program Review process will capture a holistic snapshot of strengths, weaknesses, and improvement plans based on institutional data and assessment information.

The information collected on this form will also serve to help your division complete the information required by SACSCOC for Amarillo College's continued reaffirmation efforts.

Response Length Suggestion: Most responses should be 2-3 sentences. If available, you may also provide a link to other documentation that answers each question.

I: Identification

1. **Department Title:**

   Financial Aid

2. **Department Purpose Statement:**

   The purpose of the Amarillo College Financial Aid Office is to assist students to receive a quality education by reducing their financial burden of education costs through aid that is provided from federal, state, and local government, as well as private resources. This includes grants, loans, scholarships and work study.

3. **Department Review Year (i.e. Most Recent Academic Year)**

   2013-2014

4. **Date of Submission:**

   11-25-14

5. *Lead Person Responsible for this Department Review:*

   Name: Kelly Prater
   Title: Director of Financial Aid
   E-mail: klprater@actx.edu
   Phone Number: 806-371-5311

6. *Additional Individuals (Name and Title) Responsible for Completing this Department Review:*

II: Existing Data (Not Survey, Focus Groups, and/or Interviews)

AC staff/administrators collect and evaluate data related to people served.

1. What significant AC, state, federal, or other reports do you complete on an annual basis and/or what significant quantitative data do you collect or review on an annual basis? (Please provide links to data/report information or a succinct summary of your data findings.)

   1. Gainful Employment Disclosures (U.S. Department of Education)
   2. FISAP (U.S. Department of Education)
   3. IPEDs Financial Aid Data (U.S. Department of Education)
   4. Satisfactory Academic Progress Reports (U.S. Department of Education)
   5. FADB Report (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
   6. Fiscal Year End Reports for State Grants & Scholarships (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
   7. Financial Aid Visit & Financial Aid Call Reports (Internal Data)
   8. Financial Aid Awarded (Internal Data)
   9. Financial Aid Applications Received (Internal Data)

2. Based on the past year's data (referenced in Question #1), please evaluate your data and/or department.
   (Place an 'X' in each text box that corresponds to your evaluation. You may delete or add rows.)

Data Reported/Collected (Include Most Important Data)	Needs Improvement	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
1. Gainful Employment Disclosures	X		
2. FISAP		X	
3. FADB Report			X
4. IPEDs Financial Aid Data		X	
5. Satisfactory Academic Progress	X		

3. (If applicable) If any area "Needs Improvement," please explain why (i.e. Analysis).

   Gainful Employment Data is currently a process that combines several different queries and data that must be manually reviewed from Datatel. In the future, data would be able to be more accurately reported if queries could be developed to assist in the collection of Gainful Employment information.

   Satisfactory Academic Progress policy reports currently take approximately three days to run and data to be provided to the Financial Aid office. This becomes burdensome for the students as many may not be notified of their financial aid status until after they begin courses, specifically between the spring and summer semesters.

4. (If applicable) Based on the data above, what changes do you recommend (i.e. Action Plan)?

   Development of department specific Gainful Employment data that should be collected and reviewed on an annual basis prior to the reporting deadline of 1/30 of each year.

III: Existing Data (Based on Surveys, Focus Groups, and Interviews)

In this section, provide examples of ways you used survey data or qualitative research (interviews, focus groups, etc.) to make decisions.

PART A:

1. Over the past year, did your area collect and/or review any survey data or qualitative (focus group, interview, etc.) information?
   (Place an 'X' in the text box that corresponds to your response.)

Yes (If Yes, Proceed to PART A, Question #2)	No (If No, Proceed to PART B)
	X

2. Summarize the most important information that was collected and/or reviewed <u>and</u> the results.

3. (If applicable) Based on the data above, what changes do you recommend (i.e. Action Plan)?

PART B:

Additional Comments Related to Surveys and Qualitative Research (Not Required):

PART A –No Excuses:

Each department is expected to support student success initiatives.

1. List 1 or more ways your department <u>most</u> focuses on any of the No Excuses goals/initiatives.

    1. The Financial Aid Department will be moved to the second floor of the Student Services Center. This will allow the department to assist more students in a more confidential environment.
    2. Hands on FAFSA nights conducted at each local high school to assist students and their families in completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
    3. Participation in the ACE field trip including presentation on financial aid as well as a game designed to increase student participation.
    4. Participation in the Community Link financial aid night.
    5. Coordination and planning of yearly high school counselors workshop to assist high school counselors in understanding the current changes relating to the financial aid office.

2. Are there any changes your department has made over this past year to remove barriers to students and further the No Excuses goals <u>OR</u> to move the needle toward fulfillment of the No Excuses goals?
    - ➤ If so, please explain.
    - ➤ If not, but you plan to make changes that aid students success, please provide a few sentences explaining how you can better support No Excuses.

    Change in the Satisfactory Academic Progress calculation to allow students to be eligible for aid up to 150% of the program length (Maximum Time Frame). Current calculations cut students off at 149% which prevented many students from receiving aid that they were eligible to receive under federal regulations.

PART B –Institutional Outcomes:

Each department is expected to provide quality student, customer, and/or client services.

1. For this review year, what is/were your department's <u>most important</u> goals (i.e. broad things you would like to accomplish)?

    1. Provide more timely information to students regarding their financial aid application status and documents that are needed to complete the application process.
    2. Provide easy to understand information to students placed on Financial Aid Warning or Suspension in order to eliminate calls and visits to the Financial Aid Office relating to Satisfactory Academic Progress.
    3. Provide more accurate Gainful Employment Data in order to provide accurate disclosures to students enrolled in certificate programs.

2. For this review year, what is/were your department's <u>most important</u> outcome/s that can be specifically measured and help you achieve your goals? Provide examples of 1-3 outcomes. (An outcome provides observable evidence that your student's or client's knowledge, skill, ability, attitude, or behavior has changed as a result of your efforts.)

   1. After Financial Aid implements a summer aid query which allows us to identify students who have registered for courses, 100% of all eligible students will be packaged without the student self-identifying as a potential candidate and/or completing a summer aid application request form.
   2. After Financial Aid sends students who are placed on financial aid warning and suspension an insert summarizing the reason for the status, 15% fewer students will have a need to call or visit the office during the first year the change is implemented.

3. How does your department assess the above outcome/s? What were the results of your outcome assessment? What do your results tell you?

   1. An additional 529 students were packaged for eligible aid that did not submit the summer aid application. This allowed 100% of all eligible students to be packaged for aid in the summer term.
   2. Calls and visits to the Financial Aid Office are tracked and identified to determine the reason for the students call/visit. We will be able to measure this data at the end of the Spring 2015 semester as this is when prior year data was tracked.

4. What change/s has your department made in the past year or do you plan to make based on your assessment of any outcome?

   1. The summer aid application will be eliminated for all future summer semesters.
   2. Inserts will be included in all SAP mailings.

PART C –Strategic Planning:

Each department is expected to support AC's Strategic Planning initiatives.

1. Identify at least one strategy or task from the Strategic Plan your area currently addresses/evaluates.

   Goal 2: Identify and Remove institutionally created roadblocks for prospective students: The Financial Aid Department is currently reviewing internal processes, such as the summer aid application, that cause students to initiate the financial aid process as opposed to being automatically packaged for eligible aid.

2. (If applicable) What additional item/s should AC's Strategic Plan address?

SACSOC guidelines require non-instructional areas to provide student support programs, services, and activities that are consistent with its mission and that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students.

At Amarillo College, a component of student learning is found present in the existence of AC's General Education Competencies. Due to recent mandate changes set forth by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), AC has adopted the following General Education Competencies: Communication Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility.

Although these competencies obviously relate to academia, many non-instructional areas also support some or all of these objectives.

<u>Some Examples of Ways Non-Instructional Areas Can Support Student Learning:</u>

<u>Personal Responsibility</u>: Any service that provides materials/information related to financial literacy, life planning, etc. to students could relate to personal responsibility. Also any measure of student personal responsibility (e.g. percent of students not dropped for non-pay, percent of students who pay their rent to AC housing on time, etc.) relates to this topic.

<u>Social Responsibility</u>: If students are able to serve or learn about ways to serve their community or world, this could relate to social responsibility.

<u>Communication, Critical Thinking, and Empirical and Quantitative Skills</u>: If a department teaches a skill/topic within the classroom or through a published document geared toward students, this skill/topic could relate to communication, critical thinking, or any of the other objectives—depending on the skill/topic being taught.

<u>Teamwork</u>: Any student organization/framework where students must work successfully within a group could equate to teamwork.

1. Does your area work (in-person, through publications, or through some other means) with students to learn/accomplish any of the following objectives?

Objective	Yes (If Yes to Any Area, Respond and Proceed to Part D, Question #2)	No (If No to All Areas, Proceed to Part D, Question #3)
Communication Skills	X	
Critical Thinking Skills		X
Empirical & Quantitative Skills		X
Teamwork		X
Personal Responsibility	X	
Social Responsibility		X
Note: May Insert other Objective/s		

2. For each objective that received a "Yes" response, provide a bulleted list identifying how your department addresses each particular objective with AC students, any assessments related to your objective (if applicable), and any results related to your assessment (if applicable).
   ➤ Assessments can be indirect (e.g. surveys, focus groups, etc.) or direct.

> Communication Skills:
> 1. Students are required to communicate and provide documentation to the financial aid office relating to their Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
> 2. Students who are selected for verification, are required to complete and provide additional documentation to the financial aid office.
> 3. Students with special circumstances must communicate and provide documentation to support these special circumstances.

Personal Responsibility:

1. Direct Loan Counseling is provided to all students who borrow federal loans.
2. One on one counseling provided to students who visit the financial aid office relating to questions regarding the types of financial aid.
3. Award letters are provided to students detailing the types of aid available to assist the student in covering their educational costs.
4. Emails are sent to students who fall into categories such as non-attendance, all F's, and failure to meet Satisfactory Academic progress.

3. Please indicate (place an X in the corresponding box/es) the mode of delivery by which you offer <u>any </u>support programs, services, and activities, to students.

In Person	Web	Phone	E-mail	Live Chat
X	X	X	X	

4. Do you have plans to expand your learning objectives and/or modes of delivery? If so, how do you plan to expand these objectives/delivery modes? If not, why not?

Yes, we plan on becoming more involved in Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites in order to better educate AC students on the types of Financial Aid as well the application process.

V: Policies and Procedures
This Section Is Not Required for 13-14 Pilot Review

Amarillo College's non-instructional areas consistently have procedures in place that promote student confidentiality, staff efficiency, student success, and accountability.

Each non-instructional area will respond to the Core 5 (first 5) "Policies and Procedures" questions if they are pertinent to their area. If a department has additional questions they would like to include for accountability or some other purpose, they will also include those questions on this section of the form.

1. Please explain how your area supports the security, confidentiality, and integrity of student records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data (CR 3.9.2)

2. How do you ensure that all of your employees are aware of student complaint procedures and that the procedures are handled in a way that is in accordance with the institutional policy of complaint procedures being reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized (CR 3.13.3)?

3. Has your area made any departmental changes based on student complaints? If so, what changes did you make (FR 4.5)?

4. Have you addressed any local, state, audit, or federal compliance issues that have caused you to make an adjustment to your department and/or a policy change? If so, please explain.

5. Have you made any changes to your department's policy or procedures over the past year that are otherwise not addressed in this review? If so, please explain.

VI: Conclusions

1. What is the biggest issue/obstacle that your department currently faces?
Please explain the issue, point to evidence supporting why your issue is important (addressed in this document or elsewhere), explain how you would like to fix the issue, and explain any budgetary constraints.

Manual processes that have been put in place to try and maintain regulations. In the future, the department will be moving these manual processes to electronic processes in order to become more efficient and provide more accurate and timely data.

2. Additional Comments Pertinent to this Annual Review Evaluation (Not Required):