

# De Anza College Financial Aid & Scholarships

## Reflection Questions

**1. Overview: Assess program, services, division during the 2019-20 year. Describe accomplishments, challenges and how challenges were addressed. Include evidence that illustrates accomplishments and challenges.**

- The academic year of 19/20 ended up being a challenging year, however, overall, the financial aid office overcame many of the challenges. We learned to use the tools in Campus Logic and ARGOS reports to reach out to students who have not yet completed their financial aid files, we have significantly increased our communication to these students. Although we have increased our communication, there is always room for improvement. We have shortened the wait time between submitting documents to awarding, average files are completed within a week. We are working on being more efficient by using batch processes, i.e., awarding. We utilized Zoom to meet our students where they are with open Zoom office hours, which has been a success.
- We still face some challenges with awarding CCPG to students who are attending both Foothill and De Anza. ETS has written an ARGOS report to assist in identifying those we are unable to identify during the CCPG awarding that is part of our auto-packing process. The auto-packaging process still needs some refinement, so we can run it without ETS intervention. We have faced the campus fraud situation head on and are diligently working to curtail our losses. Identifying those students has been challenging, however, working with our AVP of Instruction, Dean of Enrollment Services, Dean of Business Division, our counterparts at Foothill and ETS staff, we have been able to streamline the process for the Spring quarter.

**2. Describe how program plans were met, including evidence that illustrate how these program plans were met.**

- Our chatbot, Fina, has been live for one year. Fina has the ability to answer the most common financial aid questions. If Fina is unable to answer the student's question, we receive student inquiries through our general email, and are able to assist the student personally. The chatbot has been an invaluable tool for our students. We embarked on our third year utilizing Campus Logic as our verification software. Our students are able to upload all required documentation, including SAP Appeals, Dependency Review Requests and Professional Judgement requests, which enables the financial aid staff to review their files and provide feedback in a timely manner. We become more proficient every year with the technological enhancements. Campus Logic has helped us to free up time to better serve our students and concentrate on helping the student with the process.

**3. Describe your experience related to transition of remote work, including online services, instruction, and supporting students offsite during the pandemic.**

- Our office excelled in the transition to remote work. We were fortunate to be using Campus Logic, and Office 365 prior to March 2020. Zoom has been a tremendous asset, as it allows financial aid staff to meet with students one on one wherever they are. We have scheduled weekly Zoom open office hours and workshops. We have gained more student traffic with our open office hours and workshops. Students are also using the website and the Chatbot, Fina, to find information and learn how to contact our office. We have been able to disburse 20/21 Pell in March 2021 (10 million) at slightly above the amount at the same time in March 2020 (9.2 million).

**4. Describe how Student Equity goals were met and any improvements that were made. Include evidence that illustrate how goals were met using institutional data.**

- Financial aid is equality based. Our goal was to increase our communication and availability to students. Based on the report that was completed by the Institutional Researcher (Mallory Newell), we have disparity gaps for our targeted student groups within our scholarships and Federal Work-Study programs. We have increased scholarships workshops to co-hort groups to increase participation, however, we will not see if we had an improvement until we see the outcomes in the data for 2020-21.
- Reviewing our awarding and disbursing of the CARES Act funding, we realized that we were not being truly equitable. We were automatically funding our Pell eligible students, which on paper are our most needy students, however, our emergency fund applications revealed we needed to make changes. We began including our students that are only eligible for the California College Promise Grant (CCPG) as well.

**5. Describe the impact of the 2020 pandemic and all of the associated events have had on the students served by the program. Share what the program review data reveals about the corresponding impacts of the current circumstances.**

- The pandemic has increased the financial stress on our students and their families. In turn, we need to be more empathetic with their needs. The availability of emergency funds has had a positive impact on many of our students and will continue to be available through 2023. We have also been able to leverage the promise funds to assist students who need computers and textbooks who are not part of the Promise Program.

- As we transitioned to the remote environment, the students missed the face-to-face interaction with the financial aid team and of our students struggled to receive the needed in-person help. Many students express their gratitude for the open office hours that we have implemented.

**6. Describe resource needs based on current programs and services to effectively and efficiently serve students.**

- The Financial Aid Office has many programs we award and manage, we need technical support to update batch processes and reports to eliminate manual processing. Mature processing is essential and to move away from manual processing to give the department more time to better serve the needs of our students. Increased campus funding to support a dedicated technology support person or programs to help increase our services would be beneficial to both the students and the Financial Aid Office.

**7. Other Relevant Information, including future anticipated goals.**

- We plan to continue to provide online Zoom appointments and open office hours for students after we return to campus. We have found our Zoom environment has been served more students than our in-person extended services.