Part 2 – Comprehensive Program Review Fall 2011

Program Name: Financial Aid

A. PAST: Review of Program Performance, Objectives, and Outcomes for the Three Previous Academic Years: 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11

PRIORITY 1: The policy at IVC has always been to verify 100% of all financial aid applications prior to awarding. This practice is valued by staff and results in many students receiving financial aid who otherwise wouldn't have because the staff finds errors in their FAFSA's. However, the verification process is timely, the corrections to CPS requiring several manual operations, and the tracking of documents for all application is a gargantuan task, the result of which is that during the rush period June-October) it can take 6 to 8 weeks to verify and award a file. This is not an acceptable time frame for students who apply after July/July. As the number of FAFSAs increase, the strain on the staff during this peak period has also reached the critical stage. As we are more and more successful with Priorities 1 & 2, we must find a way to streamline the internal process so that students can receive their aid in a more timely manner.

Goal 3: To improve the program effectiveness of Financial Aid

Objective 1: The Financial Aid Office will increase access to students through more efficient business practices

Strategy 1: Review, evaluate, and adapt our application verification policy and procedures in order to reduce the amount of time between student completion of all institution application requirements and the awarding of financial aid.

Assessment: A new verification policy was adopted beginning with the 2009-2010 aid year. Instead of 100% verification, only those applications selected for verification by the CPS were verified. We had hoped to see significant reductions in backlog during the summer months with this new policy, however the backlog continued to rise during peak processing, reaching up to 10 weeks both during the 2009-2010 award year and 2010-2011. There were a couple of reasons for this.

FAFSA Data Award Years 2006-2007 to 2010-2011

Award Year	FAFSAs Processed	Percent Change
2006-07	6485	
2007-08	6689	3.1%
2008-09	7488	11.9%
2009-10	8438	12.7%
2010-11	9398	11.4%

First and most significant was the continued increase in applications (see FAFSA Data table). The number of students packaged increased nearly 10% from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010 and again 9% from 2009-2010. Finally, although the official policy was to only verify those applications selected for verification, in practice staff continued to unnecessarily review many verifiable items and make unnecessary corrections to application data thus delaying the processing and awarding cycle. Making unnecessary changes also increases the likelihood that an application will be selected for verification on a later transaction, again causing more workload.

In light of this knowledge, training has been conducted for the 2011-12 year to ensure staff was only verifying those applications selected for verification or contained potential conflicting information. Forms and procedures were changed to simplify the process for both students and staff. . All changes made to the policies and procedures will be tracked with special attention paid to the time between completion of application and awarding, with accuracy of application information a secondary evaluative measure.

PRIORITY 2: Increasing the number of students who successfully complete the FAFSA remains the #1 priority for the Financial Aid Office. We will continue to focus our outreach efforts in the area of access to individualized assistance with the on-line FAFSA process as well as submission of verification documents. This priority effort extends to current students as well as potential students in the community because we feel that students who have the financial resources necessary to support their education will be less likely to drop out.

Goal 1: To increase the retention level of Imperial Valley College students

Objective 1: The Financial Aid Department staff will assist students to complete the FAFSA on-line.

Strategy 1: Secure a full-time, dedicated Financial Aid computer lab.

Assessment: The Financial Aid Computer Lab was officially opened on September 1, 2008. A fully functioning lab With 10 computer workstations (1 equipped for wheelchair access and visually impaired use), access to important Federal and state financial aid websites, and staffed by a financial aid professional and several student assistants.

Students may use the lab to complete the FAFSA, with or without assistance from staff, apply for a pin, complete Cal Grant requirements, look-up their awards, print out financial aid information, determine disbursement dates, etc. FAFSA workshops were canceled due to low attendance but students may access the lab services on a walk-in basis.

Although the lab has been operating for 3 years, statistics on use are only available as of January 2011. Per the table below, 13,052 students have received some type of service in the lab, although we assume that some students visit the lab more than once per year. In addition, 3468 FAFSAs were completed in the lab for the 2011-12 Award year.

2011 Financial Aid Lab Use

Month	Students served for Financial Aid	11-12 FAFSAs completed
January	2029	414
February	1116	318
March	693	237
April	718	238
May	876	336
June	882	436
July	1255	385
August	2462	521
September	1006	214
October	590	110
November	900	149
December	525	110
Total	13052	3468

Students continue to use the lab at their convenience, however the number of students completing the FAFSA at home has increased significantly. The students who use the lab do so mainly because they lack computer resources at home or are unfamiliar with the FAFSA process and require assistance.

Strategy 2: The coordinated county-wide Cal Grant Drive will continue to assist high school students with the on-line FAFSA process. IVC, CalSOAP, the UCSD Outreach Office, and all local school districts will work together to provide information, computer access, and technical assistance so that all students and parents interested in completing the FAFSA process will have a opportunity to do so well in advance of the CalGrant deadline of March 2.

Assessment: In the past 2 years (figures were unavailable for 2008-2009), the IVC team has worked with staff from Imperial County Partnership for Higher Education which includes various programs such as Cal SOAP and the UCSD Outreach office, as well as the participating high school counselors to assist 2909 students with the online FAFSA.

FAFSA Workshop Data 2009-20010 to 2010-2011

Award Year	Students Served
2009-10	1464
2010-11	1445

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to complete the FAFSA on-line.

Assessment: There continues to be a steady increase in applications processed (see FAFSA Processing Data table for 2006-2011). From 2007 to 2011 there has been a steady increase in the numbers of FAFSAs completed of about 12% each year. The Financial Aid office will continue to encourage all students to use the on-line FAFSA tool and offer assistance with this process in order to increase access, accuracy and timeliness.

PRIORITY 3: Once we have succeeded in putting a student on financial aid, our priority then becomes keeping them eligible. Thus priority number 3 is ensuring that students understand the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements and what behaviors will contribute to their academic success or nonsuccess.

Goal 2: To improve student success at Imperial Valley College

Objective 1: The Financial Aid Department staff assists the IVC Counseling staff to provide "Probation Awareness" workshops to improve students' understanding of the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) regulations.

Assessment: On-line Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) workshops were instituted during the 2010-2011 award year so there has not been enough time to track how well they are working. In addition, Federal SAP standards changed significantly effective with the 2011-2012 which means the content of the workshop has changed. The new SAP standards are also much more strict meaning that many more students have been disqualified or put into "Warning" (formerly "Probation") status. Previous data would be distorted given these significant changes. We will start to track data beginning with the 2011-2012 award year to assess whether the workshops are having the intended effect.

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate understanding of how to maintain their financial aid academic eligibility by attending an Online SAP workshop.

B. PRESENT: Snapshot of the State of the Program in the Current Semester: Fall 2011

1. Give a verbal description of the program as it exists at the present time. Include information on current staffing levels, current student enrollments, student learning or service are outcome implementation, number of majors, and/or other data as appropriate.

   For 2011-12 we have made significant changes to the verification process as well as instituted a new campaign to encourage students to submit applications early. Preliminary results indicate that these changes have had positive effect on reducing the backlog of files during the peak processing period of June to October. Significant changes in the Satisfactory Academic Progress standards have necessitated changes in our on-line SAP Workshop. In addition, a new process has been instituted for students to ensure they are aware of the limitation of financial aid based on Maximum Timeframe standards. We are hopeful that these tools will ensure students have the information they need to successfully complete their programs in good financial aid standing.

2. Verbally describe any outside factors that are currently affecting the program. (For example: changes in job market, changing technologies, changes in transfer destinations, etc.)

   Outside factors which will continue to influence our business practices will be the local, state, and federal economic climate which, if it remains stagnate, will encourage further increases in financial aid applications. In addition, federal and state regulations which govern how we do business but always take precedence in any discussion of changes to policy and

procedures. Recent state budgetary issues threaten to reduce categorical funding and create additional regulatory burden on the financial aid staff through monitoring of Satisfactory Academic Progress standards for students receiving fee waivers. We will need to work closely with our Information Technology department to assist us with automation of current manual processes.

We constantly look for ways to make the financial aid application, awarding and disbursement processes as efficient as possible, however in few of current economic constraints, we will continue to give greater priority to the goal of streamlining the process to achieve faster results with fewer staff.

3. List any significant issues or problems that the program is immediately facing.

The most significant trend in financial aid continues to be the significant increase in the number of FAFSAs processed by Imperial Valley College. In 2007-08, the financial aid staff processed 6689 FAFSAs while in 2010-11, the same number of staff processed 9398 FAFSAs, an increase of 40.5% (see FAFSA Processing Data for 2006-2011). There has been a steady increase of around 12% per year between 2008 and 2011. At the same time, the college, the state of California, the country, indeed the world, is experiencing an economic downturn which precludes the hiring of additional staff to handle this steady increase in applications.

C. FUTURE: Program Objectives for the Next Three Academic Years: 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14

PRIORITY 1: Continue to finds ways to improve on processing timeframes given that the number of applications continue to increase and we do not expect to be able to increase staff given current budget considerations. Further budget cuts are looming which may even reduce the number of staff and increase regulatory burden on the staff we do have. This must remain a top priority to ensure that students are receiving aid in a timely manner.

Goal 3: To improve the program effectiveness of Financial Aid

Objective 1: The Financial Aid Office will increase access to students through more efficient business practices

Strategy 1: Review, evaluate, and adapt our application processing and awarding policies and procedures in order to reduce the amount of time between student completion of all institution application requirements and the awarding of financial aid.

Assessment: The verification policy was changed in 2009-2010. The policy change alone has not resulted in a decrease in the backlog of processing. Beginning with 2011-12, training was conducted to ensure staff was only verifying those applications selected for verification or contained potential conflicting information. Forms and procedures were changed to simplify the process for both students and staff. All changes made to the policies and procedures will be tracked with special attention paid to the time between completion of application and awarding, with accuracy of application information a secondary evaluative measure.

Strategy 2: Develop campaign to encourage early submission of applications by students. Earlier submission will allow staff to better manage workload and reduce the backlog of files during peak processing.

Assessment: The "Don't Delay, Apply Today" campaign was launched during the Spring of 2011 to encourage early submission of the 2011-12 financial aid application. The campaign included a series of flyers, posters, email blasts and social media postings. Financial staff verbally encouraged each and every student they spoke to and academic counselors were also encouraged to spread the word. The focus of the campaign is to inform students of the benefits of early application which include; faster processing, eligibility for limited campus based funding such as SEOG and Work Study, and eligibility for book vouchers.

The success of the campaign will be monitored by tracking the number of applications that are received and processed prior to our peak processing period of June through October. 2011-12 will be the first year that data will be collected.

PRIORITY 2:Increasing the number of students who successfully complete the FAFSA remains a high priority for the Financial Aid Office. We will continue to focus our outreach efforts in the area of access to individualized assistance with the on-line FAFSA process as well as submission of verification documents. This priority effort extends to current students as well as potential students in the community because we feel that students who have the financial resources necessary to support their education will be less likely to drop out.

Goal 2: To increase the retention level of Imperial Valley College students

Objective 1: The Financial Aid Department staff will assist students to complete the FAFSA on-line.

Strategy 1: Financial Aid Lab

Assessment: The Financial Aid office will continue to offer individual assistance completing the FAFSA at the Financial Aid Lab. The number of students served by the Financial Aid Lab will continue be tracked and outcomes assessed in order to determine the effectiveness of the services offered.

Strategy 2: The coordinated county-wide Cal Grant Drive will continue to assist high school students with the on-line FAFSA process. IVC, the Imperial County Partnership for Higher Education, and all local school districts will work together to provide information, computer access, and technical assistance so that all students and parents interested in completing the FAFSA process will have an opportunity to do so well in advance of the CalGrant deadline of March 2.

Assessment: The number of high schools served as well as the number of students and parents who participate will continue to be tracked and the outcomes assessed. These numbers have been tracked for many years so that we can look at the data longitudinally to establish any long ranging trends. We will also look at data comparisons within high schools to determine future impacts to the delivery of these services.

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to complete the FAFSA on-line.

Assessment: There continues to be a steady increase in applications processed (see Appendix A for FAFSA Processing Data for 2006-2011). From 2007 to 2011 there has been a steady increase in the numbers of FAFSAs completed of about 12% each year. The Financial Aid office will continue to encourage all students to use the on-line FAFSA tool and offer assistance with this process in order to increase access, accuracy and timeliness.

PRIORITY 3:Once we have succeeded in putting a student on financial aid, our priority then becomes keeping them eligible. Thus priority number 3 is ensuring that students understand the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements and what behaviors will contribute to their academic success or nonsuccess.

Goal 1: To improve student success at Imperial Valley College

Objective 1: The Financial Aid Office will provide tools to improve students' understanding of the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards.

Strategy 1: Require on-line Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) workshops for students on "Warning" status.

Assessment: The Director of Financial Aid and the Head District Counselor will review the core content of the SAP workshops to insure that the information given to students is accurate, up-to-date, and delivered with the correct emphasis on student responsibility.

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate knowledge of Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards.

Assessment: SAP Workshop attendees will be tracked and their subsequent academic progress compared to those SAP

students who did not attend a workshop.

Strategy 2: Require submission of a Student Educational Plan or DegreeWorks audit report at the point the student reaches 60 Degree Applicable units or 100% of their program length for certificate programs.

Assessment: This policy was instituted with the 2011-12 award year as part of the new SAP regulations. The intent of the policy is to ensure that students are aware of the maximum timeframe standard that limits financial aid eligibility to 150% of their published program length (90 units for most AA/AS programs) and that they know which courses they have yet to complete their program.

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate knowledge of courses required to complete their program of study within maximum timeframe standards.

Assessment: Students who are required to submit a Student Educational Plan or DegreeWorks Audit report will be tracked and their subsequent program completion within maximum timeframe standards to determine if there is improvement.

Strategy 3: Utilize WEBSTAR to provide students with individual information regarding Satisfactory Academic Progress.

Assessment: We need to concentrate our efforts in providing more information online through the IVC website and WEBSTAR. This will be an on-going process as technology and funding becomes available. We currently have general information online relating to SAP standards but we need to use technology to deliver information which enables students to become more informed about their eligibility and requirements for maintaining aid.