

**OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS
2010-11 END OF THE YEAR DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE BLUEPRINT**

Mission Statement

The mission of the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships (OSFAS) is to educate and assist students and their families in securing the funding that they need coupled with providing leadership to the University in obtaining and administering federal, state, institutional and privately funded financial aid and scholarship resources for which students are eligible. These efforts are guided by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators statement of Ethical Principles and maintained in compliance with the rules and regulations set forth by the various funding sources.

Vision Statement

It is the vision of the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships (OSFAS) to be recognized as one of the offices, if not the office, on campus that provides the highest quality of student/customer service.

Unit Overview

While the office contains no specific records of its history, like many financial aid offices, it was probably born out of the Dean of Students Office in the early 1960's; the first Financial Aid Director was named in 1964. The creation of formal financial aid offices on college campuses was generally in response to the passing of three prominent Acts by the federal government. These included the National Defense Education Act, the Economic Opportunity Act, and the Higher Education Act of 1965. Out of these pieces of legislation came the National Defense Student Loan (now Federal Perkins Loan), College Work-Study (now Federal Work-Study), Educational Opportunity Grants (now Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants), and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program (now loosely the Federal Direct Loan Program). Periodic reauthorizations to the Higher Education Act of 1965, legislation enacting new programs and revising those in existence, and ongoing amendments to regulatory responsibilities make the administration of student financial aid ever changing. In addition, coordinating the compliance responsibilities for the institution's desire to reward its students with merit based awards and to provide special assistance through need-based programs, the administration of aid awarded to the institution's students by state and private outside funding sources, and administering aid that is controlled by outside agencies such as the NCAA requires responsible oversight. Office leadership must be ever ready to adjust job descriptions and office organization in order to best service students' needs and to remain compliant with the requirements instituted by both funding sources and controlling agencies.

The OSFAS is funded with University A-funds and a portion of the federal administrative cost allowances that are earned by the University in conjunction with the administration of the

Federal Pell Grant and Federal Campus-Based (Work-Study, Supplemental Grant, and Perkins Loan) Programs.

The OSFAS currently is funded for forty (40) full-time positions. Twenty-two (22) of these are administrative with job descriptions involved almost entirely in the administration of student financial aid and scholarships. There are thirteen (13) positions that are considered support services. The remaining five (5) have job descriptions that are specific to office operation, technical support, and/or other operational demands. The office also employs a number of students who provide peer support, support of specific administrative functions, or both. In every case, the office's positions are responsible for either directly assisting students with financial aid processes or providing assistance to someone on the staff or within the University who is.

Because so much of what the OSFAS must accomplish is mandated by external-to-the-University funding sources and agencies, it differs somewhat from most other Division offices in the development of its functional goals. The volume of activity: the number of aid applications (45,067 in 2009-10) has increased 20% in the past five years; the number of aid recipients (25,303 in 09-10) up 13% over five years ago; and the amount of funding provided to them (\$367,838,600 in 09-10) having increased 35% suggests accomplishment and success. The complexity of aid administration creates demands for both student users and office staff that require constant attention to minimize confusion and procedural difficulty.

Compliant administration and quality service delivery are the two primary and ongoing responsibilities of the office; these too are its strengths and appear as a part of each of its core functional goals. There is no reason to believe that the service component of the office is not meeting the office vision. Student and parent interactions with the OSFAS appear to be perceived quite positively. Recent responses to the office "Your Opinion Matters" Survey reflect that 90% of the responding parents and 82% of the responding freshmen say that the OSFAS's overall service is "excellent"; 100% of both populations responded "good" or "excellent". When considering all responses, 94.6% said the overall service was "good" or "excellent".

Similarly, there is also no reason to have concern over the OSFAS's compliance capabilities. That the federally mandated independent annual A-133 audit of the University's financial aid administration has reflected no findings over the past ten years is testimony to the compliant administration occurring in the OSFAS. Further, the University received its first-ever federal program review this past August. While there were six findings presented as a result of this review, only three of the six pertained to administrative responsibilities in the OSFAS; and, all three were satisfied by adjusting the wording in institutional policies or procedures. None of the six suggested misuse of funds or lack of compliance, only the need for more thorough disclosure to those with whom the office works or to whom it reports.

Contextual Statement

Core functions of the OSFAS include, but are not limited to:

- compliant and service-oriented administration of the University's scholarships and those scholarships awarded to University students by outside sources. Over the past five years, scholarships received by the student body have grown in number from 22,069 to 23,381; their value has grown from \$76,919,471 to \$102,764,680 (+34%). The unduplicated numbers of scholarship recipients and the measure of its presumed growth is not readily available. Very early totals suggest that scholarships will grow only slightly, to over \$103 million, in 2010-11.
- compliant and service-oriented administration of the grant programs in which University students participate. Over the past five years, grants received have grown in number from 8,036 to 10,611; their value has increased from \$22,139,205 to \$34,251,617(+55%). The unduplicated numbers of grant recipients and the measure of its presumed growth is not readily available. Very early totals regarding grants for 2010-11 suggest a total of approximately \$40 million (+17% from 2009-10).

It is significant to note that during this five-year period, the University's commitment in institutionally-funded need-based grants has increased from providing 411 grant awards totaling \$404,500 to providing 638 grant awards totaling \$1,087,655 (+169%). Early totals for 2010-11 suggest that these numbers will grow further to 889 grants totaling \$1,493,171, an additional increase of 37%.

- compliant and service-oriented administration of the educational loan programs through which University students and their parents borrow. Over the past five years, the number of educational loans for University students has grown from 24,369 to 29,381; the dollar value of these loans has grown from \$142,418,049 to \$194,338,215 (+36%). Early indications suggest that the loan volume for 2010-11 will exceed \$205 million.

While unduplicated recipient numbers are not available for the three aid types highlighted above, over the past five years aid recipients have grown from 22,343 to 25,303 (+13% as indicated earlier). The total of their aid has grown from \$272,804,498 to \$367,838,600 (+35%).

- leadership in the identification of potential program participants and the administration, primarily the awarding and oversight of financial support, for the University's Gamecock Guarantee (GG) Program. The GG Program was created to "guarantee" low-income, first generation students from South Carolina a successful undergraduate education for which they will receive financial support that will minimize the amount they need to borrow or eliminate educational debt for participants completely. There are now three active cohorts of program participants; average annual family incomes for these students are between \$16,000 and \$18,000. A total of 352 students have been accepted into the program; at the beginning of the fall semester, 328 of these students were considered active program participants. This total includes 82 of 93 in the 2008 cohort, 111 of 125 in the 2009 cohort and 135 in this year's cohort

Important too is adjustment and growth in program funding to participants. In the program's initial year, only those participants whose grants and scholarships didn't cover their tuition expenses received program funding. Five participants received \$3,611 that year. Second year program funding was expanded to a base grant of \$2,500 plus tuition differential awards to those needing additional gift-aid support; a total of \$520,194 was provided to participants in 2009-10.

This year (year three) it is anticipated that Gamecock Guarantee Grant awards will total almost \$804,000.

There are three occurrences that have, are, or will significantly affect the OSFAS's functioning and efforts that are worthy of significant note. The first, the conversion from the Federal Family Education Loan Program to Federal Direct Lending, took a monumental effort to ensure a successful transition. Included were preparation and modification of existing procedures, communications to the service population who were affected by this adjustment, and implementation of the numerous administrative changes needed to see that borrowers received their loan funds in a timely fashion ensuring that Fall 2010 semester fees could be paid with minimal confusion. The entire conversion took approximately eighteen months but the period of emphasis was this past summer through fall semester's fee payment. Administrative tweaking to office Direct Loan Program administration is now ongoing.

The second, the conversion of financial aid administration from the University's legacy system to the OneCarolina Banner product, is ongoing. The demands for this effort are significant, stretching the office leadership dramatically and requiring both the participation and time commitment of staff that competes with the normal and ongoing responsibilities of their positions.

The third will be the implementation of the administrative responsibilities required to be fully compliant with the awarding of second-year Pell awards that will be required beginning with the 2010-11 award year. The cumbersome administrative effect of this new student benefit will be experienced most significantly this coming summer. Office planning for implementation is still occurring; implementation efforts will be manual and will add additional stress to the awarding of financial aid to support summer enrollment.

At the time of this preparation, it should be noted that federal budgetary cutbacks resulted in the tedious administrative concerns for second year Pell being abolished. While overall positive, this adjustment did not come until after summer financial aid awarding was underway. Necessary student award adjustments were made as needed but it is likely that some students' summer enrollment plans were affected by the necessary but untimely award revisions. In some cases, those experiencing award reductions were offered other aid. These same budgetary reductions will likely reduce allocations in other federal aid programs. The OSFAS is currently awaiting final funding notification for 2011-12 and anticipates needing to adjust the financial aid of some students previously awarded.

The campus-wide administrative responsibilities that lie in the OSFAS make collaboration and communication throughout the University community of monumental importance for the successful administration of student financial aid and scholarships. Perhaps most significant are ongoing planning and developmental initiatives with the Undergraduate Admissions Office as well as with other Enrollment Management Offices. Data gathering and information sharing are key among these efforts. The OSFAS contributes to every recruitment activity to which it is invited and, primarily through its working relationships with the Student Success Center (financial literacy initiatives and other) and the Academic Center for Excellence (satisfactory academic progress monitoring and support), is also active in retention efforts. The OSFAS also works closely and continually with the Opportunity Scholars/Gamecock Guarantee area of the

TRIO Office and has continually active relationships with the University Registrar's Office and Bursar's Office on many matters arising in registration through bills payment efforts. The continuation of the OneCarolina project dictates ongoing collaboration with Undergraduate Admissions, the Registrar, the Bursar, and University Technology Services.

Additional OSFAS collaborative partnerships and abbreviated descriptions which are all felt to be critical for compliance and service delivery include:

- Bursar and Student Accounts – aid delivery, refund and financial aid recovery efforts
- Orientation Office – participation in interactive activities with parents and students during annual programming
- Athletics Department – grant-in-aid processing, squad list approval, and related compliance issues
- Registrar – student data base information, registration issues, and transfer credit concerns.
- Undergraduate Admissions – University and State scholarship awarding, admissions confirmation
- Career Services – cooperation with the Job Locator and Development Program
- University Technology Services – automated administrative capabilities, VIP, enhancements
- International Programs – aid for student's study abroad, special concerns for identified students
- Various University Units – administering Federal Work-Study
- Various University Units – administering Departmental Scholarships
- Various University Units – administering graduate assistantship supplements
- College of Education and Disability Services Office – CarolinaLife Program financial aid administration
- TRIO – support of all TRIO funded programs, financial aid education
- Controller, Budget Office, Contract and Grant Accounting – general administrative communication/assistance
- Institutional Assessment and Compliance – data gathering and compliance disclosure administration
- Housing – student budget preparation, general communication and student support
- University Foundation and Development Offices – communication and cooperation on funds management
- SC Commission on Higher Education – state scholarship and grant administration, reporting, policy development and review

The OSFAS staff recognizes that few understand entirely the complexities and responsibilities of student financial aid administration. Special efforts are made continually to develop and maintain relationships within the entire University community in order to facilitate positive and productive services to all who need and/or deserve the support that this office can provide.

Goal Statements

The primary goals presented in earlier Departmental Blueprint submissions for the OSFAS for 2010-11 include:

Goal #1: Administer the University's scholarship program to best serve student recipients, support student recruitment and retention efforts, support departmental initiatives tied to their scholarship selections, and support any specific agenda presented and associated with the identification of and/or delivery of non-University scholarships

Initiative #1(a): Administer General University Scholarship program awards to recipients in a timely manner; provide information in response to inquiries about the program; provide notifications to continuing recipients in jeopardy of losing their awards; and provide report information about the program as requested

Key performance indications reflect that this initiative is being met in that awards were and continue to be posted within five work days or 48 hours as appropriate; scholarship information has been/is shared at numerous University events as well as within 72 hours of ongoing inquiries; notifications to students in jeopardy of losing their scholarship eligibility did go out within five work days of spring semester grades being posted; and reporting requests have been addressed as they have been received or, in some cases, on a scheduled basis.

Initiative #1(b): Administer the University's Departmental Scholarship program awards immediately upon notification of the awards and maintain a data base of available award information as provided by departments

Key performance indicators reflect that this initiative is being met through awards being posted to student files within 48 hours of notification receipt and adjustments to the Departmental Scholarship data base being added to the webpage as received.

Initiative #1(c): Administer non-University scholarships according to the rules and regulations of specific programs or according to the directive of the scholarship awarding entity

KPI's reflect that this initiative is being met through the ongoing institutional identification of student eligibility for programs such as SC HOPE and SC LIFE Scholarships and through the posting of non-University scholarships to students' files within 48 hours of individual award notifications and within five work days of notifications including numerous awards.

End of the year comment: While recent benchmarks with which to compare the "turn around activities" noted above are unknown, such actions taken within five work days was at one time considered to be "outstanding" within the aid community. Considering the volume and variety of award posting that is accomplished, generally at the busiest of times, suggesting more timely action would be irresponsible. In reality, however, the office benchmarks noted herein are quite often exceeded. Finally, as noted earlier, annual scholarship awards totaled slightly more than \$100 million in the most recently completed annual reporting; preliminary numbers suggest a very similar total for 2010-11.

Goal #2: Administer the University's student financial aid grant programs in a manner that meets individual program compliance responsibilities and, to the extent of

funding program eligibility and availability, best serves student applicants'/recipients' needs

Initiative #2(a): Review the requirements needed for the Federal Pell Grant Program as currently administered, assess the resources available for improvement, and initiate changes that will make administration more effective and efficient while maintaining the service needs of student recipients

KPI's reflect that Pell Grants are being made accurately and posted in a timely manner to students' files. Program recipient and award volume does continue to grow in part this year because of the initiation of the new year-round Pell awarding. Unfortunately, as indicated previously, the administrative responsibilities associated with awarding responsibilities in year two of this program modification promise to provide a significant administrative challenge in order for the OSFAS to remain compliant. Pell Grant volume has grown from 3,951 students receiving \$10,649,388 in 2005-06 to 4,700 students (+19%) receiving \$19,979,107 (+87.6%) in 2009-10. Preliminary totals for 2010-11 reflect over 5,600 recipients receiving over \$24 million.

Initiative #2(b): Administer the Federal ACG and SMART Programs, incorporating program changes to remain responsibly compliant, and in a manner that best meets the needs of program recipients

KPI's reflect that ACG and SMART Programs administration is being conducted accurately and that awards are being posted in a timely manner to student files.

Initiative #2(c): Administer the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and SC State Need-Based Grant (SNBG) Programs in a manner that is compliant and best meets the needs of program recipients

KPI's reflect that both the FSEOG and SNBG Programs are being administered accurately and that awards are being posted in a timely manner to student files.

Initiative 2(d): Athletics Grants-in-Aid will be administered in a manner that meets NCAA and institutional guidelines, appropriately coordinates athletics financial aid with all other aid student-athletes are receiving, and best meets the needs of program recipients

KPI's reflect that Athletics Grants-in-Aid are being posted in a timely manner; that all regulated grant-in-aid related notifications are being sent to student-athletes as required and in a timely manner; and that all student-athletes are being individually monitored in order to ensure compliance with NCAA regulations and coordination with other aid the student-athletes may be receiving.

End of the year comment: Benchmarks for service excellence in timely award posting are again not readily available. Federal and state grants are posted via the University's automated administrative system as soon as awarding criteria are met. Timeliness is as good as opportunity allows. Athletics Grants-in-Aid and other institutional grants are posted as soon as the office is notified of the awarding or as soon as the recipient is identified. As noted previously, grant

awards for 2010-11 appear to be increasing to approximately \$40 million, an increase of about 17% from 2009-10.

Goal #4: Administer educational loan programs in a manner that best meets individual program compliance responsibilities, provides borrowers with guidance about program participation, assists borrowers with determining best what they need to meet the financial needs of the education being funded, and assists borrowers with debt management

Initiative #4(a): Implement updated procedures that award each FAFSA filer the appropriate amount of Federal Direct Stafford Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans

With the transition to Federal Direct Lending for 2010-11, extensive efforts of communication were needed to insure that students took the appropriate steps to accept or decline their loan eligibility and the requirements needed to allow for loan delivery. That few, if any, students had difficulty in fall semester fees payment that can be linked to new DL procedures is testimony to the success in accomplishing this initiative.

Initiative #4(b): Implement updated procedures that allow parents of dependent undergraduate students and graduate students to borrow as needed through the Federal Direct PLUS Program

With the transition to Federal Direct Lending for 2010-11, extensive efforts of communication were needed to insure that the parents of undergraduate students and graduate students took all the necessary steps needed to secure the loans that they desired through the Direct PLUS Programs. As noted in the previous summary, a successful start-up to the fall semester is evidence of meeting this initiative.

Initiative #4(c): Administer the various other federal, state, and private educational loan programs in which University students participate in a compliant and service oriented manner

As the KPI indicates, borrowers through these additional educational loan opportunities are being supported as needed in order to secure the funding they desire.

End of the year comment: As noted earlier in this report, early indications of 2010-11 activity suggests that educational loans for USC students and their parents will grow to over \$205 million.

Goal #5: Contribute leadership in the effort to identify the 2010 cohort of students invited to participate in the Gamecock Guarantee (GG) Program and monitoring the continuing 2009 and 2008 cohorts of program participants

Initiative #5(a): Monitor the financial aid awarding of the 2010 participants to minimize loan dependency

As the KPI indicates, a cohort for the 2010 Gamecock Guarantee (GG) Program was identified; the cohort totaled 135 students. Preliminary data reflects that the 2010 cohort of GG participants are receiving gift aid (grants and scholarships) that make up 94.54 % of their total financial aid awards; self-help aid (loans and work-study) constitute the remaining 5.46% of their total awards. By comparison the total entering resident freshmen class is receiving gift aid and self-help aid in amounts that make up 67.17% and 32.83% of their total awards respectively. This is evidence of the individual attention and monitoring that GG participants are receiving in an attempt to minimize their dependence on educational loans.

Initiative #5(b): Monitor the continuing eligibility and financial aid awarding of the 2008 and 2009 cohorts according to program guidelines

As the KPI indicates, each member of the continuing GG cohorts is being monitored to ensure that his or her GG grant award is adjusted to ensure tuition and fees payment is covered as indicated in the program guidelines. In addition, participants are being monitored individually to support their needs to the extent possible with University need-based grants designated for students with significant financial needs, a characteristic that helps define Gamecock Guarantee Program participation.

Initiative #5(c): Reports of financial aid being received by individual recipients and each of the three cohorts will be prepared

Reporting on GG Program participants' financial aid awards will be completed at the conclusion of the academic year.