

Student Services Program Review Report

Sierra College, 2017-18

Department/Program Name: Financial Aid Department

Date Submitted: 1-23-18

Submitted By: Linda Williams

Ideally, the writing of a Program Review Report should be a collaborative process of full-time and part time faculty as well as the appropriate educational administrator, instructional assistants, classified staff members and students who have an interest in the present and future vision of the program at all sites throughout the district. The Program Review Committee needs as much information as possible to evaluate the past and current performance, assessment, and planning of your program.

1) Relevancy: This section assesses the program's significance to the students, the college, and the community.

1a) To provide context for the information that follows, describe the basic functions of your area and/or program.

If applicable, also explain how the program aligns with state mandates, priorities set by external agencies, or any other relevant organizations.

The Financial Aid Office is responsible for administering federal, state financial aid programs as well as agency and instructional scholarship programs for the Sierra Community College District. Sierra College participates in the following programs:

- *Pell Grants*
- *Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grants*
- *Federal Work Study*
- *William D Ford Federal Direct Loan Program*
- *Board of Governors Fee Waiver Program (BOGFW)*
- *Cal Grant B and C*
- *Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOS) Grants*
- *Care Grants*
- *Trio Grants*
- *CAFYES*
- *Full-time Incentive Grant for Cal Grant students*
- *Completion Grant for Cal Grant students*
- *California Promise (AB 19)*
- *Scholarships*
- *District Student Employment*
- *Federal Work Study Employment*
- *Outreach to area high schools, small groups, campus workshops*
- *AB 134 funds for Dreamers*
- *AB 1995, SB 906, for Homeless Students*
- *CalFRESH partner*
- *Emergency Book Fund*
- *Foundation Emergency Fund*

The Financial Aid office also provides technical assistance to students and parents interested in the various sources of financial aid with the completion of their FAFSA, Scholarship application, fiscal literacy for loans, and student employment documents. We refer students in crisis to our care team, provide referrals to various social service agencies, and assist with problem resolution for funding a college education.

This office is audited each year to review our ability to adhere to federal and state regulations for the awarding of funds. We stay current with changes in regulations by attending webinars, conferences, and mini convening's that are topic specific. Additionally we schedule our software consultant to come in twice a year to review our program logic to help the financial aid office minimize the risk of awarding students who are otherwise not eligible. The training and consultant time reduces institutional liabilities.

We are held accountable to the laws and regulations under Federal Title IV, CA Ed Code, State Laws, Institutional Policies, and federal and state employment laws that govern student employment.

1b) How does your program support the district mission, as quoted below, and align with student needs? Please include an analysis of how your program supports ISLOs (Institutional Student Learning Outcomes) or the district's strategic planning goals.

"Sierra College provides an academic environment that is challenging and supportive for students of diverse backgrounds, needs, abilities, and goals with a focus on access, equity, student-centered learning, and achievement. The college is committed to practicing diversity and inclusion, and recognizes that a diverse and inclusive curriculum and workforce promotes its educational goals and values. Institutional learning outcomes guide the college's programs and services, encouraging students to identify and expand their potential by developing knowledge, skills, and values to be fully engaged and contributing members of the global community. Sierra prepares students by offering Associate's and transfer degrees, certificates, career and technical education, foundational skills, as well as lifelong learning and enrichment."

Through the financial aid programs, the Sierra College Financial Aid Office strives to provide qualified students from all economic levels and diverse backgrounds an opportunity for higher education. Every effort will be made to provide assistance to students, who, without such aid, would be unable to attend college. Financial aid is awarded on the basis of need, scholastic achievement, or promise of academic success.

The financial aid office has been the economic engine for reentry students as well as for new students who wish to obtain new skills, achieve a degree or certificate or prepare for transfer.

The Financial Aid Office participates in shared governance when rolling out new or revamped processes and policies. This includes the R4S efforts.

1c) Please analyze your program and its success in supporting each of the strategic goals with which your program aligns. Please provide evidence in support of this analysis, including program goals and outcomes in this analysis, as appropriate. When relevant, please refer to student learning outcomes, assessment, and evaluation in your reply.

Goal 1: Achieve equitable access and increase student success, retention and persistence in order to increase the number of students who complete certificates and degrees or transfer to four year colleges and universities while maintaining high levels of academic integrity.

The Financial Aid Office holds numerous campus and community events to promote financial aid programs, priority processing dates and one-on-one appointments to assist with the application process. We employ student employees with multiple language skills to assist our ESL population. We advise parents/students at the counter and on the phone. We deploy an on-line book voucher program that awards over 5,000 students before the start of each term to enable students to purchase books before the semester begins which promotes student success. We publish scholarship opportunities all year long. We produce an annual online scholarship booklet to announce Foundation and community funded opportunities. We have embedded staff in the financial aid office who work directly with our RISE and Guardian Scholars Programs and cross-train staff to offer assistance with the financial aid process in EOPS/CARE/ CalWORKs, and TRiO. In addition we host agency staff to assist needy students with the CalFresh (food stamp) eligibility to enable students to stretch their limited financial aid funds.

The Financial Aid staff receives training from numerous outside agencies to assist students who are food insecure, lacks fixed housing, refer students for crisis counseling, processes requests for emergency funds, or walks with a student to our food closet which the Financial Aid Office created along with ASSC and EOPS. We find ways to provide wraparound services to students in need and in crisis.

The Financial Aid Office is keenly aware that low income students struggle with navigating the FAFSA process. For that reason we work one-to-one with students and their families to help them complete the FAFSA process by holding open workshops each Friday or going to their local high schools to work with incoming first year students.

Goal 2: Identify and close success and equity gaps amongst underserved and/or underrepresented student populations.

The Financial Aid Office processes aid for the most economically disadvantaged student. We target our outreach efforts to reach students from foster care to schools that have large populations of underserve populations. We are intentional about how we reach the neediest student. We work collaboratively with county and community organizations to explain the financial aid opportunities and offer to assist with the application process. We attempt to employ low-income students in our office so that we can better represent the students we serve. Walking a mile in the shoes of others creates trust.

Section 3 of the Program Review identifies gaps for the students we serve. We are hoping that the intervention services that are being created under the R4S efforts as well as RISE will increase success for students on financial aid.

Goal 3: Provide professional growth and develop a climate of inclusion in order to support highly effective and innovative teaching and learning, support services, operations, and collaboration.

We stay current with changes in regulations by attending webinars, conferences, and mini convening that are topic specific. Each year we select a training topic for our annual retreat that aligns with the mission of the College and to promote opportunities to better serve our students.

Goal 4: Meet and exceed external standards through an outcomes based framework for continuous quality improvement.

We continuously scan the environment for any improvements we can deliver for processing requests for financial aid. We attend product webinars or seek advice from the field about new products in the delivery of aid. In addition, we have a consultant come into our office 2-3 times a year to ensure that we are using the tools we have effectually.

Goal 5: Modernize, revitalize and develop new facilities and infrastructure based on the current Facilities and Technology Master Plans.

Our office was moved during spring 2017. This move provided additional space to offer increased customer service and provided a training room that is used part time to assist low income students with the completion of a CalFRESH application. The relocation also improved the professional appearance of the Financial Aid Department.

Goal 6: Expand community partnerships and funding opportunities to support strategic goals and leverage resources.

The Financial Aid Office assists the Foundation with grant writing to meet the needs of our Foster Youth attending Sierra College. In addition, the Financial Aid Office partners with the Foundation to create several new scholarships to meet the needs of many underserved populations. We are frequently asked to speak at non-profit events to promote opportunities to provide funding streams for underserved students. We are often asked to sit on statewide taskforce to develop equitable policies for new state funding for our economically disadvantaged populations.

Please include an analysis of program goals and service area outcomes in your description, as appropriate.

1d) Optional Additional Data: Describe any other contributions of your program not incorporated in the prompts above and relevant to the district goals, mission, and values. These may include but are not limited to contributions to diversity, campus climate, cultural enrichment, community ties, partnerships and service. Please include specific data and examples when these are available and relevant to the analysis.

2) Currency

2a) Service Outcomes and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Considering any relevant information, please describe and analyze your program’s development and assessment of Service Assessment Outcomes and/or Student Learning Outcomes. Please describe any improvements or changes made to the program as a result of this analysis.

Outcomes and outcome data:

The following information demonstrates the type of aid awarded by academic year since our last assessment. The number of FAFSA students served has decreased from 1617-1415, numbers which coincide with our enrollment decline.

Award Year 2016-2017		
Fund	Students Served	Award Amount
BOG Fee Waiver	12,338	\$40,170,663
Pell Grant	5,872	\$19,893,773
Cal Grants	1,212	\$1,491,652
Varies grants (CAFYES, CalWORKS, CARE, Chafee, EOPS, FTSG, SEOG)	3,055	\$2,357,062
Student Loans	975	\$6,714,247
Scholarships	443	\$521,712
Federal Student Employment	134	\$512,891
District Student Employment	815	n/a
Number of FAFSA Applications Received	19,096	

Award Year 2015-2016		
Fund	Students Served	Award Amount
BOG Fee Waiver	13,299	\$43,645,872
Pell Grant	6,516	\$22,001,825
Cal Grants	1,131	\$1,405,185
Varies grants (CAFYES, CalWORKS, CARE, Chafee, EOPS, FTSG, SEOG)	2,800	\$1,842,935

Student Loans	1,160	\$8,074,955
Scholarships	452	\$569,425
Federal Student Employment	126	\$446,100
District Student Employment	562	n/a
Number of FAFSA Applications Received	19,980	

Award Year 2014-2015		
Fund	Students Served	Award Amount
BOG Fee Waiver	14,152	\$45,516,222
Pell Grant	7,174	\$23,682,071
Cal Grants	1,090	\$1,240,690
Varies grants (CARE, Chafee, SEOG)	2,800	\$660,275
Student Loans	1,313	\$9,133,055
Scholarships	503	\$573,614
Federal Student Employment	107	\$412,486
District Student Employment	668	n/a
Number of FAFSA Applications Received	21,674	

Assessment of outcomes:

In the space below, please describe or attach the cycle you have developed for outcomes assessment.

The Financial Aid Office uses an award year to assess outcomes. Fall/Spring/Summer (summer is a trailer). Financial aid cycle is July 1 – June 30 each year.

2b) Professional Development: Describe how departmental activities serve to improve teaching, learning and scholarship. Please be sure to specifically include flex activities, departmental meetings and activities, conferences, outreach to other colleges, research and implementation of best practices, changes in legislation, mandates from regulatory agencies, required faculty certifications, health and safety trainings or other factors. How do these activities contribute to your program's self-assessment and planning?

1. *Staff attends formal in person training conducted by the US Department of Education, State offered training, national and regional association training a few times a year for program or mandated changes. Annual IRS training for verification. Annual Citizenship training.*
2. *We are in consent flux with staying current with our integrated software and the many updates that we need to load and test before moving to a production environment. We frequently have to troubleshoot production problems with IIT and our vendor.*
3. *We attend frequent webinars and subscribe to list serves that supports our continued education and innovation in the delivery of financial aid.*
4. *Many staff meetings are used to discuss changes and approaches to needed changes as well as to keep abreast with what we are doing to process the aid requests*
5. *Annual retreat & team building activities*

6. *Attend health & safety training on campus*
7. *Implement continues quality improvements in technology such as new automated data loads, document imaging.*
8. *Invited each year to meet with our elected official for Day at the Capital. Work with Cash for College campaigns.*
9. *We work closely with our state legislators to facilitate change within our industry*

2c) Optional Additional Data: Enter additional data or other information here that you believe to be an indicator of your program’s effectiveness and explain why.

N/A

3) Effectiveness: This section assesses the effectiveness of the program in light of traditional measurements.

3a) Retention and Success/Service Outcomes – Please analyze your success in achieving your program goals (including Service Outcomes and/or Student Learning Outcomes), using whatever data is relevant to your program. Describe any changes you have made that have improved the effectiveness of the program as well as any barriers you may have encountered in making these or other changes. If applicable, please include any analysis related to Student Success or Equity. If you determine that you need to improve the program’s performance in any way, please describe how you plan to achieve this goal.

Following the cohort of students who began at Sierra in the 2013-14 academic year, students with financial aid are generally lower performing than students without financial aid. The exception seems to be higher completion rates for older students (25 and above) for both full and part-time FA students. Completion is defined as students receiving either a degree, certificate or transferred.

Interventions and supports services should be developed for students who are on financial aid under SSSP funding so that we can increase their completion rates. This is an equity issue that should have been addressed when we were first funded under SSSP. We are now moving in this direction under the R4S movement but not fast enough for this population.

				Has Completion1 (Award/4-Year Transfer)			
				no		yes	
First Term of the Academic Year	Age Range	Student Type	Financial Aid Recipient	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
2013-14	18-24 Years	Full Time	N	184	40.7%	268	59.3%
			Y	305	56.1%	239	43.9%
		Part Time	N	1798	73.6%	645	26.4%
			Y	1732	82.6%	365	17.4%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	N	28	65.1%	15	34.9%
			Y	91	60.3%	60	39.7%
	Part Time	N	879	85.3%	152	14.7%	

			Y	1026	80.2%	253	19.8%
2014-15	18-24 Years	Full Time	N	322	54.2%	272	45.8%
			Y	400	63.4%	231	36.6%
		Part Time	N	1986	84.0%	377	16.0%
			Y	1854	89.3%	222	10.7%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	N	37	77.1%	11	22.9%
			Y	126	70.8%	52	29.2%
Part Time		N	938	86.9%	141	13.1%	
		Y	1068	87.4%	154	12.6%	
2015-16	18-24 Years	Full Time	N	539	75.6%	174	24.4%
			Y	521	78.1%	146	21.9%
		Part Time	N	2167	91.7%	196	8.3%
			Y	1810	94.3%	110	5.7%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	N	49	70.0%	21	30.0%
			Y	160	81.6%	36	18.4%
Part Time		N	904	91.2%	87	8.8%	
		Y	961	92.0%	83	8.0%	
2016-17	18-24 Years	Full Time	N	747	94.2%	46	5.8%
			Y	863	96.4%	32	3.6%
		Part Time	N	2137	95.7%	96	4.3%
			Y	1515	97.0%	47	3.0%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	N	64	95.5%	3	4.5%
			Y	164	91.6%	15	8.4%
Part Time		N	892	94.8%	49	5.2%	
		Y	730	94.6%	42	5.4%	

**Success rates by cohorts through F 2017 is also higher for the older full-time FA students.
Success is defined by receiving passing grades**

First Term of the Academic Year	Age Range	Student Type	FA_RECIPIENT_IND	Success Rates			
				fail		pass	
				Duplicated Count	Row N %	Duplicated Count	Row N %
2013-14	18-24 Years	Full Time	N	1581	11.0%	12773	89.0%
			Y	2398	13.9%	14798	86.1%
		Part Time	N	6646	34.0%	12893	66.0%
			Y	8884	42.8%	11858	57.2%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	N	87	12.9%	587	87.1%
			Y	563	12.7%	3855	87.3%
Part Time		N	858	23.4%	2802	76.6%	
		Y	3813	40.6%	5576	59.4%	
2014-15	18-24 Years	Full Time	N	1413	10.8%	11639	89.2%
			Y	2168	13.6%	13803	86.4%
		Part Time	N	5686	35.6%	10277	64.4%
			Y	8212	43.6%	10643	56.4%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	N	88	11.5%	680	88.5%
			Y	442	10.8%	3664	89.2%
Part Time		N	794	23.4%	2595	76.6%	
		Y	3267	40.6%	4775	59.4%	
2015-16	18-24	Full Time	N	1265	10.8%	10404	89.2%

	Years		Y	1726	14.7%	9999	85.3%
		Part Time	N	4615	36.2%	8122	63.8%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	Y	6198	45.2%	7529	54.8%
			N	66	9.9%	598	90.1%
		Part Time	Y	400	14.1%	2431	85.9%
			N	643	23.3%	2121	76.7%
		Full Time	Y	2391	41.3%	3395	58.7%
			N	895	13.8%	5613	86.2%
2016-17	18-24 Years	Full Time	Y	1127	15.2%	6292	84.8%
			N	2795	39.1%	4353	60.9%
		Part Time	Y	3379	49.8%	3409	50.2%
			N	37	10.0%	333	90.0%
	25 Years and Older	Full Time	Y	165	12.8%	1128	87.2%
			N	421	23.4%	1381	76.6%
		Part Time	Y	988	40.9%	1428	59.1%
			N				

3b) Usage Trends - Identify and analyze the usage trends relevant to your program for the last three years. Address separately the data for on ground and on-line services, as well as usage at the various centers when applicable. Analyze these trends as well as any challenges experienced by the program. If applicable, please include any analysis related to Student Success or Equity. If you determine that you need to improve the program's performance in any way, please describe how you plan to achieve this goal.

The financial aid office contributes to the retention & success by processing requested financial aid so that students may pay tuition, fees, books, transportation, housing and some living expenses. Since our last program we moved to going paperless. We have imaged about three-fourths of our paper files which has enabled us to quickly access records and answer customer service questions. In addition, we sought out ways to find funding for books and supplies for students who may not be financial aid eligible but still have great need.

Challenges: Low income students traditionally come to college underprepared. We know this and desire to find ways to not be a hammer but better prepare ourselves to deal with this type of student later in the FAFSA cycle. Using our online communication tool called MySierra is not student or staff friendly. Students are not responding to our email communications and wait until the month before schools starts to turn in any needed documents. It would be nice if we had the ability to change our communication tools to adjust to what our student expects. Emails are not what most students read. After speaking with several student groups to seek ideas about how to better communicate they all prefer texting. Our verification process is rather clunky for students. Once students respond to our request for information, and depending on the time of year, it can take weeks to process a file as our only method for this is a manual one. We have reviewed and recommended a vendor to help automate the verification process for students that would allow the aid office to process aid in 2-3 days rather than 4-6 weeks. Funding is the barrier for this purchase.

As you can see from the data, students on financial aid are performing lower than students who are not. Generally students who can afford to come to college are better prepared and their family influences are greater.

Interventions and supports services should be developed for students taking distance learning courses who are on financial aid under SSSP funding so that we can increase their success. This is an equity issue that should have been addressed when we were first funded under SSSP. We are now moving in this direction under the R4S movement but not fast enough for this population.

Financial Aid students show considerably lower pass rates in online courses compared with non-financial aid students. The on ground course success rate at all campuses are higher for financial aid students through not as high as for non-financial aid students. Distance education courses make up 15% of the coursework for financial aid students and 12% for non-financial aid students.

TermFirst_AcadYear	AgeRangeRecode		FA RECIPIENT	Success Rates				
				fail		pass		
TermFirst_AcadYear	Campus	Age Range		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
2013-14	Distance Learning	18-24 Years	N	946	26.0%	2694	74.0%	
			Y	1615	35.6%	2918	64.4%	
		25 Years and Older	N	202	23.6%	653	76.4%	
			Y	1356	39.7%	2056	60.3%	
	Nevada County Campus	18-24 Years	N	388	25.5%	1136	74.5%	
			Y	778	30.0%	1815	70.0%	
		25 Years and Older	N	72	24.3%	224	75.7%	
			Y	348	28.2%	886	71.8%	
	Rocklin Campus	18-24 Years	N	6578	24.1%	20742	75.9%	
			Y	8513	29.0%	20857	71.0%	
		25 Years and Older	N	592	23.2%	1962	76.8%	
			Y	2537	29.4%	6087	70.6%	
	Roseville Centers	18-24 Years	N	160	21.4%	588	78.6%	
			Y	251	26.7%	690	73.3%	
		25 Years and Older	N	34	9.7%	317	90.3%	
			Y	94	25.3%	277	74.7%	
	Tahoe-Truckee Campus	18-24 Years	N	155	23.4%	506	76.6%	
			Y	125	25.0%	376	75.0%	
		25 Years and Older	N	45	16.2%	233	83.8%	
			Y	41	24.7%	125	75.3%	
	2014-15	Distance Learning	18-24 Years	N	876	25.7%	2534	74.3%
				Y	1723	33.9%	3354	66.1%
			25 Years and Older	N	193	25.6%	560	74.4%
				Y	1229	36.9%	2101	63.1%
Nevada County Campus		18-24 Years	N	315	24.0%	995	76.0%	
			Y	472	24.7%	1437	75.3%	
		25 Years and Older	N	77	23.5%	250	76.5%	
			Y	305	31.9%	652	68.1%	
Rocklin Campus		18-24 Years	N	5690	24.3%	17696	75.7%	
			Y	8013	29.6%	19078	70.4%	
		25 Years and Older	N	566	21.2%	2106	78.8%	
			Y	2101	27.9%	5417	72.1%	
Roseville Centers		18-24 Years	N	67	17.7%	311	82.3%	

		Y	106	24.4%	328	75.6%	
	25 Years and Older	N	13	5.6%	219	94.4%	
		Y	47	21.9%	168	78.1%	
	Tahoe-Truckee Campus	18-24 Years	N	151	28.4%	380	71.6%
		Y	66	21.0%	249	79.0%	
	25 Years and Older	N	33	19.1%	140	80.9%	
		Y	27	21.1%	101	78.9%	
2015-16	Distance Learning	18-24 Years	N	654	24.5%	2015	75.5%
		Y	1173	37.2%	1984	62.8%	
	25 Years and Older	N	168	24.9%	508	75.1%	
		Y	1039	41.8%	1449	58.2%	
	Nevada County Campus	18-24 Years	N	237	22.9%	798	77.1%
		Y	505	31.6%	1095	68.4%	
	25 Years and Older	N	68	20.6%	262	79.4%	
		Y	186	26.6%	512	73.4%	
	Rocklin Campus	18-24 Years	N	4789	24.0%	15191	76.0%
		Y	6111	30.3%	14040	69.7%	
	25 Years and Older	N	437	20.6%	1680	79.4%	
		Y	1509	28.9%	3713	71.1%	
	Roseville Centers	18-24 Years	N	75	21.3%	277	78.7%
		Y	83	24.9%	250	75.1%	
	25 Years and Older	N	13	5.7%	217	94.3%	
		Y	35	30.2%	81	69.8%	
	Tahoe-Truckee Campus	18-24 Years	N	125	33.8%	245	66.2%
		Y	52	24.6%	159	75.4%	
	25 Years and Older	N	23	30.7%	52	69.3%	
		Y	22	23.7%	71	76.3%	
2016-17	Distance Learning	18-24 Years	N	366	27.1%	983	72.9%
		Y	515	36.9%	879	63.1%	
	25 Years and Older	N	85	20.4%	331	79.6%	
		Y	436	44.4%	545	55.6%	
	Nevada County Campus	18-24 Years	N	153	24.4%	473	75.6%
		Y	302	33.4%	603	66.6%	
	25 Years and Older	N	40	22.0%	142	78.0%	
		Y	67	22.2%	235	77.8%	
	Rocklin Campus	18-24 Years	N	3092	27.3%	8229	72.7%
		Y	3628	31.2%	8017	68.8%	
	25 Years and Older	N	297	21.8%	1063	78.2%	
		Y	638	27.0%	1728	73.0%	
	Roseville Centers	18-24 Years	N	30	16.0%	157	84.0%
		Y	27	26.2%	76	73.8%	
	25 Years and Older	N	14	11.6%	107	88.4%	
		Y	7	14.9%	40	85.1%	
	Tahoe-Truckee Campus	18-24 Years	N	49	28.3%	124	71.7%
		Y	34	21.3%	126	78.8%	
	25 Years and Older	N	22	23.7%	71	76.3%	
		Y	5	38.5%	8	61.5%	

However, the data also shows that students in online courses who receive financial aid and did not use tutor.com had a 65.6% pass rate in all courses, whereas if a financial aid student did use tutor.com had a pass rate of 77%. Perhaps when financial aid students sign up for online courses we should encourage them to use tutor.com to improve their success rates.

Sierra College: Comparison of Success Rates For Financial Aid Recipients and Use of Tutor Dot Com, Fall 2015 to Spring 2017

						fail		pass	
						Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
INSTR_METHOD_DESC	Classroom	FA_RECIPIENT	N	hasTDC	No TDC	18500	23.70%	59443	76.30%
					Yes TDC	176	18.40%	780	81.60%
			Y	hasTDC	No TDC	26419	27.80%	68646	72.20%
					Yes TDC	296	18.80%	1279	81.20%
INSTR_METHOD_DESC	Online	FA_RECIPIENT	N	hasTDC	No TDC	3440	24.70%	10479	75.30%
					Yes TDC	29	13.50%	186	86.50%
			Y	hasTDC	No TDC	8275	34.40%	15755	65.60%
					Yes TDC	100	23.00%	335	77.00%

Student Employment:

While we can't claim any causal relationship between Sierra College student employment and success rates, we do see higher success rates associated with student employment. It's as if, as a group, student employees are more highly successful. FA recipients are still less successful than their non-FA recipient counterparts; however, FA recipients who are student employees show well above average success rates, both online and on-ground.

It is my belief that student employees who may be struggling academically or personally are receiving interventions from the departments they are working in or they are being referred to services.

Sierra College: Comparison of Student Employees and Financial Aid Success Rates, 2013 - Fall 2017 First Enrolled Cohorts

CAMPUS_DESC	EMPLOYEE CLASS	FA RECIPIENT	Success Rates			
			fail		pass	
			Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Distance Learning	non-Student Employee	N	5101	25.1%	15202	74.9%
		Y	11957	37.4%	20023	62.6%
	Student Employee	N	78	9.9%	709	90.1%
		Y	316	21.2%	1175	78.8%
On-ground Total	non-Student Employee	N	31216		97925	75.8%
		Y	45046		104455	69.9%
	Student Employee	N	586		5721	90.7%
		Y	1473		8296	84.9%
Nevada County Campus	non-Student Employee	N	1879	22.3%	6555	77.7%
		Y	3771	30.9%	8451	69.1%
	Student Employee	N	45	5.6%	753	94.4%
		Y	135	13.1%	895	86.9%
Rocklin Campus	non-Student Employee	N	27972	24.6%	85879	75.4%
		Y	40002	30.3%	92138	69.7%
	Student Employee	N	530	9.8%	4855	90.2%
		Y	1330	15.4%	7303	84.6%
Roseville Centers	non-Student Employee	N	547	16.6%	2756	83.4%
		Y	805	25.4%	2367	74.6%
	Student Employee	N	3	12.0%	22	88.0%
		Y	8	12.3%	57	87.7%
Tahoe-Truckee Campus	non-Student Employee	N	818	23.0%	2735	77.0%
		Y	468	23.8%	1499	76.2%
	Stu Employee	N	8	8.1%	91	91.9%
		Y	0	0.0%	41	100.0%

3c) Productivity –Analyze the significance of the trends as well as the challenges experienced within the program. . If you determine that you need to improve the program’s performance in any way, please describe how you plan to achieve this goal.

Award Year	FAFSA Applications	Mandated secondary Review (Verification)	Completed Secondary Review (Verification)
2016-17	19,096	7,309	2,917
2015-16	19,980	8,024	3,349
2014-15	21,674	7,126	2,915

As you can see from the data, we are not having problems with students completing the FAFSA. This is a good indication that our outreach events are fruitful. What is telling is the staggering number of students selected for a secondary review (verification) and the completion rate. Students tell us that our system is complicated (we use Banner) and we would agree. We have interviewed several vendors that could provide a student friendly process for submitting documents to our office that is compatible with Banner. We refer to this as Verification Software. Students can use modern technological means to submit the needed information to our office. This same information has built in edits that could allow for a programmatic seamless review of data to determine that we have matches on what is needed for review. This can be done without our having to manually review the same data. We could award a student in days rather than weeks. This type of software would allow students to receive aid faster and hopefully increase the rate of completed verifications. This is a way not to punish the underprepared student.

3d) Referring to your ePAR Report of Goals, Strategies, Actions, and outcomes assessment cycle and relevant assessments/evaluations, please describe your program’s plans to maintain or increase its effectiveness and evaluate your efforts to achieve these goals.

The Financial Aid Department will continue to monitor innovative ways to communicate with students to help them navigate the completion of the FAFSA, offer one-to-one help with any challenges a student may face with the FAFSA process or any life circumstances they may need referrals to. We continue to find ways to communicate in a way a student may find understandable.

3e) Optional Additional Data: Enter additional data or other information here that you believe to be an indicator of your program’s effectiveness and explain why.

4) Resources: This category assesses the adequacy of current resources available to the program and describes and justifies the resources required to achieve planning goals by relating program needs to the assessments above.

- 4a) Please describe the future direction and goals of your program for the next three years in terms of sustaining or improving program effectiveness, relevance, and currency. Please include any analysis of relevant performance assessments in your explanation.

It is our hope that the District will fund the requested software to help with the verification process of financial aid. This same software could also be used to image our documents. We do not have the staffing to sustain our document imaging needs.

We are set to upgrade our software (Banner) that will allow students to only be paid for courses that are in their degree program. This may help improve the completion and success rate of financial aid students and help preserve their financial aid for transfer goals. This new Banner feature will also help students stay focused on taking only courses that are needed for their degree and perhaps stop the wondering.

- 4b) Equipment and Technology: Comment on the adequacy of the program's equipment and technology funding level for the District as well as specific sites. Include a projection of equipment and technology needs for the next three years as well as a justification for needs. Please include analysis of any relevant performance assessments in your explanation.

Generally funds (BFAP) issued from the State of California for financial aid processing is sufficient for equipment or technology needs. However, we desire to use verification software that process aid for financial aid sooner and more efficiently as well as communicates with students using texting, emails, or phone. We currently do not have a texting feature for financial aid. We held several works groups with students to determine how they wish to communicate and texting was by far the more requested. This same software will also solve a problem with document imaging our paper files. All documents that we need can be uploaded by students and their parents and can be used to place within our district imaging system. The Financial Aid Department will not have sufficient funding to cover the cost of this software and therefore we are seeking district funds.

- 4c) Staffing: Comment on the adequacy of your program's faculty, classified, and student help staffing levels for the overall District as well as specific sites. Include a projection of staffing needs for the next three years and justification for any increases. Please include analysis of any relevant performance assessments in your explanation.

We have submitted a need for a customer service technician to supervise the front counter staff. To offer the best service we can to our students requires constant monitoring of our student employees and their training needs. The district is asking the staff that processes the work of qualifying students for aid to also monitor the front office team. While we are doing this now, it is not efficient. We are working towards having all new students complete a FAFSA as part of the process when they apply to attend Sierra College. This will increase the front office traffic and phone calls. A Financial Aid Customer Service Technician would be needed for this increase in student contacts and would need to be district funded.

NCC is currently staff with one permanent employee and 3 student employees. With the increase in FAFSA processing, the NCC office will be understaffed. I have requested a part time employee for the NCC Financial Aid Office to be funded by the District

4d) Facilities: Comment on the program’s fill rate and the adequacy of the facilities for the District as well as specific sites. Include a projection of facility needs for the next three years as well as a justification for any increases. Please include analysis of any relevant performance assessments in your explanation.

Computer labs are a hot commodity on campus. The Financial Aid Office has a need for a computer lab to be operated all day long to assist students and their families when they need help completing the FAFSA or Scholarship application, not just when we can reserve a lab. Effective 2019-20, The US Department of Education will mandate that all students’ receiving federal aid attend a workshop about their rights and responsibilities to receive this aid. We do not have the capacity to hold these workshops due to the lack of lab space which could double as a classroom for these mandated workshops.

4e) Please check the appropriate boxes in the chart below indicating the general reasons for the resource requests described above (please check all that apply):

Function/Role	Maintenance	Development	Growth	Safety	Outcomes	Other success measures	No Requests
X		X	x		X	X	

5) Summary/Closing

5a) Evaluate the program’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities/future directions, challenges.

Strengths: The Financial Aid Office processes about \$50 million in federal and state financial aid. The strength is our employees. We have ten hardworking dedicated staff that processes aid for 60% of our students. The same staff conducts outreach activities to the classroom, off campus or one-to-one appointments. We conduct weekly workshops for Loan Literacy, FAFSA or Scholarship workshops. We each keep current with mandated updates or trends using our yearly conference or weekly webinars or by reading federal and state regulations as it relates to the delivery and eligibility or compliance of these funds. The staff of the financial aid office tend to be the ear of the student for any hardships they are experiencing and attempt to find solutions.

The Financial Aid Office has given up space to allow CalFresh staff (food stamps) to meet with our students on campus to assist them with food stamp eligibility. Often times the financial aid office will have documents the student submitted for aid determination that can also be used to determine food stamp eligibility. Many times students are not aware they are even eligible. This process has allowed students to stretch their limited financial aid dollars and hopefully increase their classroom success.

The Financial Aid Office along with ASSC and EOPS developed the Food Pantry along with countless community partners. What you see today is a direct result of our efforts.

Working with our county partner, we are able to refer our students and staff to the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program (VITA).

Weakness: Low income students find it difficult to navigate the FAFSA process using our current system. We need to find a solution to process aid faster using innovative technology. We know low income students come to us late in the process and yet we can't find a way to use technology to not be the hammer but to offer a hand. We believe verification software could be the innovation we need.

Opportunity:

Explaining the life of a low income student is one thing. I believe that creating an activity to expose the reality of low income students from different angles is a learning opportunity for all staff at Sierra College. To just talk about it is not as impactful as a true simulation. I would like to create an experiential environment to allow staff to understand hunger, or choices they must make to either pay for food or books or buy new tires for their car. Low income students come with other challenges that fully prepared students don't seem to suffer from.

Under the numerous promise programs the state and the District has will require that students first complete the FAFSA. In time, that means that all students must complete the FAFSA. Bringing others into the fold about the FAFSA process will assist this department with messaging how to pay for college. It will be through our partnerships that we begin the discussion early about how to pay for college and that everyone who wishes to go to college can.

5b) Please provide any other information the Program Review Committee should consider.

5c) How has the author of this report integrated the views and perspectives of stakeholders in the program?

This document was reviewed by the staff of the Financial Aid Office with includes student employees.