Mission and History

Mission
The Financial Aid Office (FAO) makes a degree financially possible for every qualified USU student. Financial resources are awarded to students based on federal law, state law, and university priorities in accordance with its land-grant mission to promote access to higher education. Services include:

- Administering Federal and State Grant and Loan Programs
- Coordination of Work-Study through the Career Services Department
- Coordination of Scholarships through the Scholarship Office
- Helping Raise Awareness of Financial Aid Programs
- Financial Counseling for USU Students

In order to fulfill its mission, policies and procedures must be continually evaluated to ensure prompt, efficient service in compliance with law.

History
The USU Financial Aid Office has been a key part of USU Student Affairs Division (formerly USU Division of Student Services) for decades. As an integral part of enrollment management, the FAO is a key player in student’s decisions on whether higher education is an affordable choice. In addition, the FAO coordinates work-study and scholarships, which are both handled by other offices in the division.

Goals

Immediate Goal, year 2016/17
CampusLogic Implementation
The USU Financial Aid Office recently implemented an electronic means of form collection, which also allows for electronic signatures for all documents. This implementation occurred in Spring 2016; with this recent implementation, the goals for the upcoming year surround this implementation:

- Continuation of service at or above the level prior to implementation
- Quick and efficient service to students, staff and faculty
- Accuracy at or above the level prior to implementation
- Evaluation of staff requirements to be completed by Spring 2017; purpose of evaluation is to see whether staffing levels and/or duties can be switched due to the CampusLogic implementation.

Long Term Goals, 3-5 years

Staffing Needs and Increased Enrollment
Document and predict staffing needs based upon increased enrollment. Enrollment projections continue to point upwards, and our staffing needs remain constant. Yearly evaluations of workloads assigned to staff, and the change in workflow processes with the new CampusLogic program will occur.

Reevaluate FAO processes at USU Eastern
Currently, the FAO has 2 FTE at USU Eastern Price and 1 FTE at USU Eastern Blanding. Evaluation of processes and demands to occur over the next 3-5 years to view our needs at these remote locations.
Federal Work Study evaluation
In conjunction with Career Services, evaluate the Federal Work Study program and set out goals. In addition, currently, the Federal Work Study (FWS) program is handled primarily through Career Services. Prior to 2011, Student Employment and FWS were a part of the FAO. The split occurred, and the current organization has FWS being handled through Career Services. An evaluation of the current organization structure is needed to review efficiency, accuracy, and workload.

Scholarship Office evaluation
In 2011, the Scholarship Office was created, and the processes of the Scholarship Office were moved from the FAO to the newly formed Scholarship Office. An evaluation of the current organization structure needs to occur to review efficiency, accuracy, and workload.

Summer Enrollment Initiatives
Work with the Enrollment Management Team on initiatives surrounding Summer enrollment, increased enrollment overall, retention, and outreach.

Programs/Services
The mission of the USU FAO is to help make a degree financially possible for every qualified USU student. However, federal financial aid is just one part of a payment strategy that should include money saved by the family and student for attending school as well as scholarships and waivers. Grants, student loans, parent loans, and work-study funds are offered to students who qualify to help increase access to higher education. The FAO is the primary destination for students to apply for financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) www.fafsa.gov.

Services
Services include:
- Administering Federal and State Grant and Loan Programs
- Work-Study Eligibility on a student level
- Helping Raise Awareness of Financial Aid Programs
- Financial Counseling for USU Students

Programs
The USU Financial Aid Office coordinates all Title IV Aid administered through the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. The following two tables demonstrates the volume of aid that is distributed through the FAO.

Table 1: Overview of Financial Aid paid in the most recent 5 year period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Pell Grant</th>
<th>Loans</th>
<th>FSEOG</th>
<th>Work Study</th>
<th>Perkins Loan</th>
<th>UHEAA Grant</th>
<th>HESSP Grant</th>
<th>TEACH Grant</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>33,284,590</td>
<td>51,626,889</td>
<td>826,261</td>
<td>1,091,096</td>
<td>2,150,000</td>
<td>332,145</td>
<td>92,003,611</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>36,913,317</td>
<td>61,982,898</td>
<td>920,794</td>
<td>1,291,454</td>
<td>1,882,756</td>
<td>83,721</td>
<td>385,843</td>
<td>103,460,783</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>37,608,539</td>
<td>59,817,192</td>
<td>952,393</td>
<td>1,314,513</td>
<td>2,606,087</td>
<td>11,919</td>
<td>106,317</td>
<td>388,392</td>
<td>102,805,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>37,054,870</td>
<td>59,407,491</td>
<td>922,388</td>
<td>1,349,729</td>
<td>1,864,220</td>
<td>35,963</td>
<td>23,600</td>
<td>284,105</td>
<td>100,942,366</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>38,009,508</td>
<td>61,847,720</td>
<td>921,088</td>
<td>1,472,229</td>
<td>1,394,947</td>
<td>25,946</td>
<td>80,675</td>
<td>280,549</td>
<td>104,032,662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: the 2015/16 year data is not included, as it will not be finalized until September 2016.

Table 2: Overview of Students served in the most recent 5 year period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Pell Grant Amount</th>
<th>Students Served</th>
<th>Direct Loans Amount</th>
<th>Students Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>33,284,590</td>
<td>8,816</td>
<td>51,626,889</td>
<td>9,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>36,913,317</td>
<td>10,528</td>
<td>61,982,898</td>
<td>10,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>37,608,539</td>
<td>10,402</td>
<td>59,817,192</td>
<td>10,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>37,054,870</td>
<td>10,187</td>
<td>59,407,491</td>
<td>10,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>38,009,508</td>
<td>10,239</td>
<td>61,847,720</td>
<td>10,085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the 2015/16 year data is not included, as it will not be finalized until September 2016.

Federal Work Study and Career Services

The Federal Work Study program is partially managed by Career Services, and partially managed by the Financial Aid Office. Career Services handles posting of jobs, collecting student paperwork, awarding of individual students and ensuring eligibility on a student level. The Financial Aid Office handles most banner processes that integrate with the Financial Aid Module, reporting to the Department of Education, the allocations of funding levels, and the determination of funding levels between our federal and state sources. In addition, the Financial Aid Office works with Career Services on a biweekly basis to ensure that student’s accounts in the Financial Aid module of banner accurately reflect their earnings.

Scholarship Office

The Scholarship Office, while a separate office that reports to the Office of Budget & Planning, utilizes the Financial Aid Module of Banner. In addition, most students and parents view financial aid as entire package, to include federal aid, scholarships and work study. To this end, the Financial Aid Module programmer/analyst, as well as other staff within the Financial Aid Office work together with the Scholarship Office to ensure that processes are done accurately and timely. The 2014/15 year saw $62,840,807 in scholarships being processed through the Financial Aid module of banner.

2014/15 Academic Year final numbers

At the end of the 2014/15 academic year, the Financial Aid module handled the processing of $166,873,469 in student financial assistance. This number does not include 3rd party resources or Veterans payments.

Staffing and Training/Development

The USU Financial Aid Office reports to the Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Service & Retention within the Division of Student Affairs. The FAO consists of 22 full time employees; this includes 19 full time staff in the Logan Office, 2 full time staff in Price, and 1 full time staff in Blanding. The department’s organization chart is located in Appendix A.

Training is done at the local, state, regional and national level. The FAO utilizes the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators training guide to thoroughly train all new employees upon hire. Additional training opportunities are done through online sources, webinars, and/or conferences. Staff
is encouraged to take part in the state organization, as well as opportunities that arise within the university.

**Budget Narrative**

**Federal Aid Budgets**

Each year the Financial Aid Office is allotted funds by both federal and state government. The Financial Aid Office oversees the awarding and disbursement of federally funded programs including Pell, Teach, Perkins, and Direct Loans. Annually, over 100 million dollars are disbursed to USU students through these federal programs. Specifics were discussed above in the “Programs” section. Additionally, funds are allocated on a state level to be used for Grants, Work Study and Scholarship funding. These funds are based on availability and number of students attending the university. The Financial Aid Office manages several of these federal and state accounts, with over 2.5 million dollars allotted each year. The office works to allocate these funds to as many students as possible, to assist them financially during their educational pursuits.

**Operating Budgets**

The Financial Aid Office receives E&G budget of approximately $850,000 that covers 85% of the office salaries (this amount in FY17 has increased to $900,000 with the addition of another employee). Operating costs are accumulated through the collection of administration fees from the federal government. As managers of the federal and state funding, we are allotted a certain percentage of the funds, that is calculated based on the number of students receiving these funds. These fees are used to cover daily office operations, travel, and training. In addition, a portion of the administrative fees collected is used to supplement the 15% of salaries not covered by E&G funding. The office works to maintain one years’ worth of operating budget in reserve. Thus, administrative fees that are collected during the current year, are used to cover operating and salary costs for the following year. On average, $155,000 is collected yearly from administrative fees, however, this amount can fluctuate from year to year. Additionally, we expect this amount to decrease, as a significant portion of our administrative fees are collected from the Perkins program, which is a limited fund that will be discontinued in the near future.

Exact budget numbers for FY15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Operating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY15</td>
<td>$700,949</td>
<td>$312,770</td>
<td>$100,564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated above, the sources for covering the costs above are split between E&G, and our Administrative Cost Allowance fees collected from the Department of Education.

**Facilities, Technology/Equipment**

**Facilities**

The USU FAO is housed in three physical locations

- The Logan Main Office is located in Logan, Utah in the Taggart Student Center, Room 106 on the Logan USU Campus. 19 FTE employees work from this location, along with a varying work force of student work study employees.
• USU Eastern, Price Office, is located in Price, Utah at the Jennifer Leavitt Student Center, 2nd Floor. 2 FTE employees work from this location, along with a varying work force of student work study employees.

• USU Eastern, Blanding Office, is located in Blanding, Utah at the USU Eastern Blanding Building, main floor. 1 FTE employee works from this location.

In addition, the USU FAO shares a conference room space with Admissions, located also in the Taggart Student Center, Room 106.

**Technology**

Each member of the FAO professional staff is furnished with appropriate technology which includes a PC or Mac Workstation or Laptop, or a combination of these. The department holds shared laptops, projectors and LCD televisions with dedicated computers to promote instructional and outreach activities. In the shared conference room there is an IVC unit to connect with our staff at remote locations.

**Website Information**

The USU Financial Aid Office’s website is [www.usu.edu/finaid](http://www.usu.edu/finaid). The Department of Education requires that institutions participating in the Title IV aid program publish specific information; most of this information is for transparency for students as well as consumer information.

Our website on a yearly basis has approximately 371,000 pageviews. The volume of pageviews is consistent with the traditional academic year cycle, with highs in April, August and January.

**Ethical Considerations and Professional Practices**

The Financial Aid staff adhere to a Financial Aid Code of Conduct ([http://www.usu.edu/finaid/conduct/](http://www.usu.edu/finaid/conduct/)). In addition, all members of the department adhere to Utah State University Policy and Guidelines and all Regulation and Legislation of the State of Utah and Federal Governments.

Periodic training over a variety of ethical and professional practices occur within the department, these trainings for all staff include. FERPA, Sexual Harassment Prevention, USU Policy Updates. Additionally, individual sections undergo training at annual national, regional, and state conferences.

The USU FAO adheres to the best practices and guidelines of national bodies including:

1. Federal Student Aid (FSA), [https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa](https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa). FSA is the department within the Department of Education that regulates the financial aid industry.


**Completion/Retention**

The Financial Aid Office’s mission is to help make a degree financially possible for every qualified USU student. Within this context, the FAO is part of a plan for students to succeed academically.
The FAO works tirelessly with students, departments on campus, and outside entities to ensure that completion of a degree is achieved.

In order to fulfill its mission, policies and procedures must be part of daily operations. Within the framework of financial aid, students must meet basic satisfactory academic progress in order to remain utilizing federal aid as a payment strategy. The FAO fully utilizes counselors and online tools to educate and ensure that the students of USU are fully aware of the policies and procedures, and the options available to all students.

**Assessment & Evaluation**

**Assessment**

**Objective #1 Provide accurate, timely service to students.**

Measurement: A random-sample survey of students is conducted biannually to assess overall satisfaction with FA services. Exception reports are run at least weekly, usually daily to monitor timeliness of student awards and disbursement of aid. The office conducts daily awarding of financial aid to provide timely service.

**Objective #2: Maintain compliance with federal law.**

Measurement: In the office’s quality control program, student files are reviewed for accuracy and compliance with regulation. Annual compliance audits are conducted by the State. The last two audits had no findings of non-compliance. Independent consultants are hired periodically to give a “friendly” view of compliance. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), was hired in 2015 to conduct a Standards of Excellence Review. All recommendations were evaluated on a scale of priority, and either completed or reviewed.

**Objective #3: Train staff to meet changing demands.**

Measurement: Staff participates in open weekly staff meetings and weekly functional group meetings. Paperwork is checked for accuracy with quality control program. Students are invited to appeal decisions of staff, and provide feedback. Staff are encouraged to participate in webinars, conferences, and online assessments done by FSA.

Past/Ongoing Assessments:

1. State of Utah audits
2. USU audits
3. Federal Program Review
4. Biannual Student Satisfaction Survey
5. Verification forms (assess clarity of forms and instructions)
6. Quality Control program (evaluate accuracy of staff)
7. Staff feedback from daily interaction with students

**Translating Assessment Data into Action**

Input from various forms of assessment are discussed in weekly staff meetings, training sessions, and annual retreats. Changes are proposed and endorsed by the staff in these meetings.

**Resulting Changes from Assessment**

1. Allotment of office resources in response to feedback and assessment. Counselors handle specific portions of the alphabet to give continuity in service to students.
2. Forms have been changed to an electronic process.
3. Supplemental applications have clearer instructions.
4. Financial Aid information is available to students on the FAO website.

Results from the past 6 Student Satisfaction Surveys are located on the FAO website: http://www.usu.edu/finaid/assessment/.

**Conclusion**

The Financial Aid Office strives to be a dynamic office, focusing in depth on customer service and the overall goal of helping students achieve their academic goals. The FAO continues to be aware of changes, on a micro and macro level, to ensure that delivery of service is consistent and accurate.
References


