

2013-2014 Unit Report

Student Financial Services

Mission Statement:

It is the mission of Student Financial Services at Kean University to provide all students with the opportunity to obtain funding which will meet their educational costs through financial aid, scholarship support and superior accounting practices. Financial Services encompasses the Office of Financial Aid, the Office of Scholarship Services and the Office of Student Accounting. It strives to offer customers the most efficient, courteous and accurate service possible on every level. These standards are upheld by maintaining detailed and complete records which adhere closely to the mission and policies of Kean University and all associated governing bodies.

Vision Statement:

The vision of the Student Financial Services division is to put the students we service first by emphasizing the importance of providing positive and respectful customer service experiences. We strive for excellence in our communications and interactions with students and their families. Through the use of technology we empower students to navigate with ease through the various processes that encompass student financial services.

A) 2013-2020 Strategic Plan Goal #2: *“To attract and retain more full-time, first time undergraduate, transfer and graduate students” (Financial Aid)*

The Office of Financial Aid will seek to increase the number of workshops designed to assist prospective and returning students through the process of applying for federal and state financial aid thus promoting early filing of financial aid applications. When students complete their aid application prior to the published internal deadline and provide any necessary documents, the estimated aid package is available prior to the tuition and fee deadline date. An email blast will be sent to both prospective and returning students alerting them to the sessions. We will use the Cougar's Byte and our Facebook page to advertise the dates. The University community will be informed of the workshops so as to encourage students to participate. In the prior year three FA workshops were offered, however data wasn't collected to track the number of participants. The objective is to offer eight sessions prior to April 17th (priority filing deadline) to encourage students to apply early. Data will be collected to identify prospective and returning student attendance.

- a) *Responsible Individual:* Sherrell Watson-Hall, Director of Financial Aid
- b) *Measures:* Attendance records will be maintained to record the number of students served. Specifics regarding the dates, locations and frequency of the workshops will be documented and compared to prior year offerings. Data regarding the number of ISIR's received by month and by population (first time students and returning students) will be collected and analyzed to determine if a correlation exists between the dates of the workshops and an increase in applications. It is expected that more than 50% of returning students complete the FAFSA prior to April 30th. It is expected that 50% of full time, first year students file their FAFSA prior to June 1st.
- c) *Timeline with milestones:* Workshop schedules will be determined by the end of the 2013 year. Communications publicizing the events will be created and sent on a periodic basis beginning in January of 2014.
- d) *Implementation plan for this objective:* Workshop dates will be determined to coincide with both the institutional priority deadlines and state deadlines in mind to promote early filing of aid applications. Workshops will take place on the Kean University campus in various computer labs and the day of the week and time these events are offered will vary to maximize attendance.
- e) *Data collected:* The Office of Financial Aid scheduled eight FAFSA workshop sessions on the following dates:
- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Sunday, February 9</i> | <i>37 attendees</i> |
| <i>Wednesday, February 19</i> | <i>21 attendees</i> |
| <i>Tuesday, February 25</i> | <i>33 attendees</i> |
| <i>Wednesday, March 5</i> | <i>14 attendees</i> |
| <i>Thursday, March 20</i> | <i>24 attendees</i> |
| <i>Wednesday, April 2</i> | <i>32 attendees</i> |
| <i>Tuesday, April 15</i> | <i>50 attendees</i> |
| <i>Wednesday, May 14</i> | <i>24 attendees</i> |

A total of 235 students were assisted during the workshop sessions. Out of the 235 attendees, 95 were prospective students. Close to 60% of the attendees were current Kean students and the other 40% were prospective students. The currently enrolled Kean students opted to attend the latter workshop sessions beginning in March, while the prospective students' attendance tapered off after the February 25 workshop. The highest attendance was recorded during the April 15th session, which was two days prior to Kean's priority FAFSA application deadline and also coincides with the IRS

tax filing date. Since current year tax data is required on the FAFSA, some students wait until the information is available prior to completing their FAFSA applications.

- f) *Action taken based on data collected:* The Office of Financial Aid will take into consideration the success of the workshop series when planning the schedule for the next award cycle. Based on attendance records it appears that prospective students tend to apply earlier in the year, thus offering additional opportunities to assist these students early in the application process may help to attract more full time, first time students. The Office of Financial Aid will continue to offer professional assistance to students through the process of obtaining federal and state aid, including the continuing population.

Scholarship Services

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Office of Scholarship Services to help support the academic excellence of prospective and current deserving Kean University students through philanthropic scholarship support. The Office is dedicated to providing financial access to a world-class education, as well as upholding ethical standards of scholarship dissemination and assessment.

The Office of Scholarship Services functions within the scope of the University and Foundation in their missions, as well as in conjunction with the Foundation Board, to strategically promote and grow the pool of available scholarships and further the advancement of scholarship recipients as they move beyond Kean University.

Vision Statement

The Office of Scholarship Services will remain a student-centered pillar of the Kean University mission to provide its students with an accessible world-class education. The Office will continue to offer a wide diversity of merit and needs-based scholarships which will adhere to the scope of the campus community as it grows and changes. In the future, Scholarship Services will closely track its scholars as they move through their time at Kean, as well as continue connecting with them once they become successful alumni, in an effort to ultimately establish a philanthropic relationship. The Office will strive to market and promote its world-class scholars, as well as Kean University and the Foundation both within and beyond the campus community through electronic, print and broadcast media.

B) 2013-2020 Strategic Plan Goal #2: “To attract and retain more full-time, first time undergraduate, transfer and graduate students”

B) Objective A.3: Increase the overall number of freshman online Kean University Foundation scholarship applications by a minimum of 5% by June 15, 2014; and an equal amount of 5% for overall applications received.

Responsible Individual: Brian Treanor, Director

Promote the online Kean University Scholarship Application and all available opportunities to an increasing number of prospective students meeting these criteria through targeted events such as Open House, Student for a Day and New Student Orientation with Undergraduate, Graduate and Transfer Admissions.

- a) ***Responsible Individual:*** Brian Treanor, Director of Scholarship Services
- b) ***Measures:*** The online application software will track the number of initiated and submitted applications, and segment them. Additionally there will be a new section on the application inquiring where the applicant learned about the availability. Between these features, along with the fact that the program automatically tracks the class year for each student applicant and awardee, there should be a strong connection and indicator of the progress and success of the online application and process; as well as a better idea of exactly how we are getting the word out, and where we perhaps need to further advance these initiatives.
- c) ***Timeline with milestones:*** We can begin collecting applicant information after December 1, 2013 when the application goes online and begin tallying upon the deadline date of March 1, 2014. Data will be tracked as it is verified by student enrollment as the semester progresses and compared to statistics from previous years.
- d) ***Implementation plan for this objective:*** Implementation will be handled by utilizing the application tools and software for outcomes and projections.
- e) ***Data Collected:*** The Office of Scholarship Services increased the number of incoming freshman student applications received by a dramatic 135% over 2013-14. This was the number of applications completed and submitted to the Office of Scholarship Services. In terms of total scholarship applications, that number increased by 17.4% from the previous year.
- f) ***Action Taken Based on Data Collected:*** While these results were clearly strong, the Office of Scholarship Services is primarily concerned with the factors for such an increase, in terms of understanding 1) why the jump in overall freshman applications was so dramatic, as well as contemplating how to set goals for next year (ie was 5% too low of an estimate or was this current year an aberration based on numbers from years prior to 2013-14). Initially it can be argued that the Office's attempt to reach out to school counselors with scholarship information early in the year, and attendance at the annual School Counselors Reception certainly helped to enhance numbers, the increase is so remarkable that other reasons such as social media and web presence must also have played a role. This data will be further analyzed. Regarding the much more "grounded" but impressive 17.4% rise in applications, we believe this can be attributed to an enhanced presence in social media such as Facebook, Twitter and KeanExchange; as well as our 'rapid response' email system, telephone information line and communication with students on the website and in such campus publications as the Cougar's Byte. Further analysis will be conducted to see if any other factors may have contributed to this increase.

A) 2013-2020 Strategic Plan Goal #7: “To establish a revenue flow, and financial planning and resource allocation processes that are sufficient, dependable, and consistent to support Kean Universities ongoing financial obligations and future ambitions, in light of ongoing reductions in public funding”

B) Objective B.2: Increase the number of Kean University Foundation scholarship awards in areas of need as determined by Kean University operations management and other leadership entities, as well as the availability of funds. These will focus on the areas of incoming freshmen as well as overall students. The 2014-15 target is a 2% increase for incoming freshman scholarships awarded and a 5% increase in total scholarships awarded via the Foundation.

a) ***Responsible Individual:*** Brian Treanor, Director of Scholarship Services

b) ***Measures:*** This objective will be measured by totaling all available Kean University Foundation scholarships that have been awarded to students with the above background between the application deadline date of March 1st through the June 15th announcement date.

c) ***Timeline with milestones:*** Scholarship Services through the Kean University Foundation intends to add at least a total of 6 scholarships in the above-mentioned areas for the 2014-15 academic year (beginning September 2013), which will support highly-qualified applicants in these areas, through private donor support.

d) ***Implementation plan for this objective:*** Scholarships in the above areas will be added to the list of available Foundation Scholarships on the Website as they become finalized.

e) ***Data Collected:*** As of July 14, 2014, the number of incoming freshmen who received scholarships was up 93.5% from the same time in 2013. The total number of scholarship awards to date is up 17.1% from the same point in 2013.

f) ***Action Taken Based on Data Collected:*** Much like the impressive increases in total incoming freshman and overall applications received, some research will be conducted into possible underlying reasons for such a dramatic and strong increase in awards. Beyond that, many new scholarships included criteria for incoming freshmen, as desired by operations management and leadership; while an cohesive effort between the Office of Scholarship Services and Kean University Foundation was undertaken to review all scholarships, and attempt to work with donors to broaden criteria for scholarships which were either defunct in academic concentration, demographical information or other constraining elements. A growth spurt in the Foundation staff also likely played a prominent role, and this trend is expected to continue going forward.

A) 2013-2020 Strategic Plan Goal #10: “To develop, sustain and be ready to operationalize a forward thinking culture of public health and safety awareness rooted in adherence to all external and internal standards (fire, safety, etc.), and reaching out to every aspect of Kean University life (personal, institutional, educational)”

B) Objective C.1: Partner with the online Kean University Scholarship Application software provider and Kean University OCIS to help ensure the most accurate academic and logistical information are provided.

- a) ***Responsible Individual:*** Brian Treanor, Director of Scholarship Services
- b) ***Measures:*** This objective will be measured by having OCIS match and verify all pertinent logistical and academic data regarding the scholarship application and review process (e.g. academic major, GPA, current address, ID number, etc).
- c) ***Timeline with milestones:*** Upon completion of the Kean University Scholarship Application on March 1, 2013, the aforementioned logistical data submitted by students on the application will be sent to Kean OCIS for verification before applications are turned over to the committee for review.
- d) ***Implementation plan for this objective:*** The Director of Scholarship Services will work directly and confidentially with OCIS to ensure that all data entered by students on the application is accurate.
- e) ***Data Collected:*** A data request for all verifications for scholarship applicants' financial data was submitted via email to the Office of Financial Aid on March 4th. A week turnaround was requested. Verification was completed on March 6. This was three days less than the timeframe from 2013. The logistical information was submitted to OCIS on March 6 and completed on March 11th. This was in comparison to four days in 2013 – still well within the allotted timeframe.
- f) ***Action Taken Based on Data Collected:*** These turnaround times allowed for the Scholarship Review Committee to begin its process earlier than anticipated, allowing for the award notifications to be made to incoming freshmen on April 15th, earlier than many other comparable universities, thus ideally giving Kean a competitive edge in enrolling these students. Further review will be necessary to confirm that this was the case. All current students were notified of their award status on June 12, three days ahead of the self-imposed notification deadline by the Office of Scholarship Services.