

# Assessment Cycle Plan

## Academic Year 2016 – 2017

Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships

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### The Student Experience Mission Statement

The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provides equal access to education for potential students throughout the state and region and promotes economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical, and occupational growth. The Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates have the capability to promote economic development and improvements in the region.

### Enrollment Management:

The Office of Enrollment Management is a student-centered division that is future focused providing educational access to students in our region in order to improve the lives of our citizens. High School Relations, Financial Aid and Scholarships, and Admissions work collaboratively with University faculty and staff to provide services and programming that are innovative and surpasses state and federal guidelines. Enrollment Management fulfills the university's mission and commitment to academic quality, diversity, equity, and inclusion

### Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships Mission

Our mission is to find the best possible aid package for a diverse student body to enable each of our students the financial ability to achieve their educational goal. Our office offers a wide variety of programs that are available from federal, state and institutional funds under the general headings of loans, grants, third party funds and work opportunities. The Office of Financial Aid will keep students informed of all current federal regulations and changes in those regulations. We are dedicated in providing all students and their families with counseling and the services necessary to gain access to educational funds by promoting financial aid awareness, ensuring compliance with federal, state and institutional regulations and guidelines, while committing to honesty, fairness, equality and integrity in all aid awarded to all students of

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our university. We will be a leader among our campus community for high quality and innovative student services, which includes a more effective use of technology for both our processing and communication with students.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the director;
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff, will determine and propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships Effectiveness  
Service Outcomes:

### **SO 1. *Achieve 100% satisfaction rate with students***

Measure 1.1.

Our office strives to, not only accomplish our duties accurately and efficiently, but to achieve complete satisfaction with each student that we assist. Our goal is to create a student survey to determine a base satisfaction rate, so that we can determine what areas of service is in need of improvement. We will give the students a chance to provide feedback on ways they feel our office could improve. This data will help us to strengthen areas of weakness within our procedures, so that we may better serve each one of our students and improve our satisfaction rate beyond just an acceptable rate of 75%, until we meet our target of 100% satisfaction.

Finding: Target not met. Survey results showed that out of 322 students who responded, 69% stated that they feel confident in the assistance they receive at the Financial Aid office. 23% stated that they do not feel confident in the assistance received and 8% selected Not Applicable. Of the 321 students who responded, 74% agreed or strongly agreed that the Financial Aid office processed their aid in a timely manner. 18% of students disagreed or strong disagreed that their financial aid was processed in a timely manner, with 8% choosing not applicable.

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Analysis: With only an average of 321 students responding out of 6658 students that received federal aid through our office, it is evident that we are only receiving satisfaction feedback from a small portion of students. Although the survey gives us an idea on what some students are having issues with and what they would like to see improved with our office, a 5% response rate does not represent all federal aid recipients.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Our office will use the information received on the survey to continue to improve on customer satisfaction within the office interactions with potential and incoming students, current and transferring students, and parents. We will continue to strive to reach our goal of 100% satisfaction. We will also discuss setting up a “feedback response” through a student’s MyNSU account that will prompt the student to rate their satisfaction with the Financial Aid Office before proceeding into their account.

### Measure 1.2.

In order to better assist students and help them understand the rules and regulations of what is required of our office, we aim to improve job performance of all of our financial aid administrators. To accomplish this, our officer administrators will receive continued training and education through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Credentialing. Currently, eight (8) out of the fifteen (15) employees in the Financial Aid Office have two or more credentials through the NASFAA Credentialing Service. Our target is to have 100% of Financial Aid Administrators credentialed in all areas of financial aid services. This will increase the satisfaction rate by ensuring that our employees are able to offer the most current and accurate information to students and parents.

Finding: Target not met. At the end of the 1617 award year credentialing completions rate is 11%. Only 17 out of the 153 credentials have been earned.

Analysis: There are 9 Financial Aid employees who will pursue a total of 17 separate credential titles each for a total of 153 credentials in the Financial Aid Office. These credentialing tests consist of attending a National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators classes and completing the credential test for each topic. At the end of May 2017, the Financial Aid office has completed 17 credential tests, leaving 136 left to accomplish. It will take more than a few years to reach our goal of 100% due to budget and time restraints.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: We will continue to send Financial Aid Administrators to credentialing classes until we achieve complete credentials for all employees. We plan to increase the number of credentials by 34 test in the upcoming 1718 award year.

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#### ***SO 2. Increase Financial Aid Requirements Awareness to students by increasing workshops, presentations and notifications.***

##### Measure 2.1.

Increase the number of students receiving this Financial Aid information to a broader populace of the student body. Present and host informational opportunities for students to inform them of the financial aid process. The target is to conduct four sessions, two per semester.

Finding: Target met. The Financial Aid Office conducted five informational presentations during the fall and spring semesters.

Analysis: In the 2016-2017 year, the Financial Aid Office attended Graduate/Transfer Day, Grad Fest, Alumni Receptions in Natchitoches and Shreveport and Nursing Night in Shreveport to allow students opportunities to get information on the Financial Aid process and ask any questions.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Even though the target was achieved, our office will continue to increase informational opportunities giving students every possibility to learn the importance of the financial aid requirements and responsibilities. We plan to start a financial aid open house at the beginning of each semester to strengthen student/office relationships and to help them feel more comfortable when dealing with the Financial Aid office. We also plan to begin an end of semester table within the student union to help students complete any outstanding issues before the semester is over.

##### Measure 2.2

Create a more tangible awareness of the Financial Aid Requirements, Federal Regulations and School policy to the student body through presentations, workshops and student notifications. Our target is to increase presentations, workshops and student notifications each year, until we reach a minimum of 75% of student organizations and athletic groups.

Finding: Target not met. Only one of the 106 active campus organizations were presented with Financial Aid Information.

Analysis: During the 2016-2017 year, our office presented to 19 orientation classes, including Shreveport and Leesville campuses. Information was also presented at N-Side View, Scholars day, Freshman Connections, SGA officers, transfer students, high school students at Natchitoches Central and high school groups that toured the campus. This summer we will present at the Summer Bridge for athletes.

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Action – Decision or Recommendation: Beginning in the 2017-2018 we will make contact with campus organizations to set up times to meet during the year.

#### Measure 2.3

A Financial Aid knowledge questionnaire for students to complete each academic year to use the data, from year to year, to track the improvement of Financial Aid knowledge and awareness. We can also use the information to determine what areas need to focus on in the presentations and workshops mentioned in Measure 2.1 Our target is to have students score 85% or higher on accurate responses received through the questionnaire.

Finding: Target not met. After reviewing the Financial Aid Knowledge Survey, the average correct response was 72%, which fell below our target of 85%.

Analysis: The Financial Aid knowledge Survey included a large variety of questions regarding all aspects of Title IV eligibility, including questions regarding the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), Satisfactory Academic Progress, Loan Repayment and withdrawal questions. Out of 6,658 students, an average of 325 students responded. A low student response rate the result of the survey being sent out at an inopportune time for students during the end of the end of the semester.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: The effect of adding workshop opportunities is anticipated to reflect on the next financial aid knowledge survey, as we strive to reach and exceed our goal of 85% accurate response rate. To achieve a greater student response, our office will send the survey out to students prior to the end of the year.

### **SO 3. *Decrease Cohort Default Rate***

#### Measure 3.1.

Increase contact and notifications with students who have either graduated or ceased half-time enrollment. Our goal is to increase the number of completed exit counseling sessions to a minimum of 75% completion. We will do this by reaching out to all students who have graduated or ceased half-time enrollment and have not completed the exit counseling.

Finding: Target not met. For the 2016-2017 year, only 397 out of the 1,847 students that fell below half-time status completed the required exit counseling with the Department of Education. A 21% completion rate falls drastically below our minimum goal of 75%.

Analysis: Currently, our office contacts students who have ceased half-time enrollment by email and paper letter. These notifications are instructing students on what is required of them now

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that their loans are no longer in school deferment. This analysis reveals that students are disregarding the notifications received by our office regarding the exit-counseling requirement. By doing so, students are not fully aware of what is required of them, now that their loans are no longer in default status. This can cause the student to unknowingly miss payments and fall into loan default with their loan servicers.

Action – Decision or Recommendation: Our office will remove the exit-counseling requirement from the generic “unsatisfied requirement” email and create an “action required” specific email regarding the completion of the exit counseling. We will attach a follow up email every 21 days for students who do not complete the requirement after the first notification.

#### **Comprehensive summary of key findings and decisions:**

After review, it is evident that areas of the Financial Aid Offices are in need of enhancement, as well as, modification and improvements. In order to achieve our goals set forth in the objectives listed above, we will dedicate the 2017-2018 academic year to implementing the actions and recommendations that are stated within each measure so that we may reach the anticipated targets by the end of the new year. Our office will do so by reaching out to students to ensure they are receiving the finest support and assistance while pursuing Federal Aid here at Northwestern State University. We want to create a friendly and inviting environment within the office, so that students feel welcomed and confident in the services they are receiving. We want to be able to assist students to the best of our abilities, not only while they are attending the university, but also after graduation and into the work force, which is when their loan repayment becomes due. We will increase informational opportunities to a broader spectrum of students throughout the campus. We will greet each student that enters, emails or calls our office with friendly, respectful and encouraging service, while making sure that their needs are met and their concerns are relieved. The financial aid office will utilize the student email and MyNSU account services to reach out to students who have not completed their aid requirements and to request feedback and satisfaction responses through an electronic student survey. It is crucial that our Financial Aid employees remain informed of the latest rules and regulations set forth by the Department of Education. To do so, our financial aid administrators will receive continued training and education through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Credentialing Service. By receiving the credential certifications, our employees will show their dedication, willingness and ability confidently serve the students of Northwestern State University.