SECTION 2: ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION & OFFICE MANAGEMENT

2.1 Institutional & Divisional Structure

The Office of Financial Aid is located under the Finance Function and directly reports to the Vice President of Finance. The Vice President of Finance sits on the Administrative Council and reports directly to the President of the college.

The Director of Financial Aid coordinates the work of the office with the Director of Billing, the Director of Admissions, the Registrar, and the Professional Studies Director of Student Accounts. The Director is a member of the Student Services Team, the Admission and Retention committee and the Administrative system Power Users Group.

Last updated: 02/21/2009

Resources

2.2 Financial Aid Office Structure & Position Responsibilities

The Office of Financial Aid consists of four, full-time professional staff on contract, one full-time administrative assistant on hourly pay and one part-time student employee. The specific positions are: Director of Financial Aid, three Financial Aid Counselors, one administrative assistant and one 30-hour-per-week student employee.

The Director is responsible for the coordination of work among the professional staff, Return of Title IV calculations, website management and policy and procedure development. Each of the Financial Aid Counselors is in charge of a specific area of financial aid. One counselor is a loan specialist, one counselor is in charge of verification, student eligibility and Federal and State grant programs, and the third counselor is in charge of packaging, mail processing and institutional scholarships and need-based aid. The administrative assistant's primary areas of responsibility are electronic communications between the school's SEOG mailbox and the administrative software, administration of the Federal work study program, communication efforts to students, and oversight of the student employees.

The director, one financial aid counselor, the administrative assistant and the student employees are located on the main campus. Two financial aid counselors are located in the east Wichita campus. All professional staff and students are responsible for financial aid counseling and customer service provided to students and families concerning financial aid.

Resources

See: Financial Aid Job Descriptions

2.2.1 Personnel Policies

Policies

The financial aid office follows the personnel policies as set forth by the college's policy manual and administered by the Human Resource function at the college.

Procedures

If a question arises concerning personnel policies, the staff refers to the policy manual located online at: www.sckans.edu/policy or asks the Director of Human Resources.

2.3 Frequent Contact Information

Resources

The majority of incoming communication is routed through the general financial aid mailbox and phone number. The general office e-mail is finaid@sckans.edu and the phone number is (800) 846-1543 ext 6215. Depending on the question or issue, students are routed to the appropriate personnel for resolution.

2.4 General Aid Office Administration

Resources

The members of the Office of Financial Aid communicate daily to resolve issues via Instant Messenger services provided by MSN.

The work of the office is coordinated using a protected, shared calendar, task list and document space on the server. Monthly tasks are posted on this site detailing the work of each member of the office. Meetings to coordinate work and to work on specific areas of training are held on an as-needed basis.

Each member of the office is expected to work a minimum of 40 hours per week. It is recognized that office work may occur at any time throughout the day. Office hours are flexible provided that in the Winfield location the office is open from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. and in Wichita the office is open from 9:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m. each day that classes are in session.

The Director of Financial Aid is primarily located on the main campus but spends a minimum of one day a week at the Wichita location. The Director holds an individual meeting with each staff member on an as-needed basis a minimum of one time per week.

2.4.1 Accommodations for Disabilities

Policies

The Office of Financial Aid complies with Southwestern College policies regarding disabilities located in the college's policy manual at www.sckans.edu/policy.

Procedures

If a question arises concerning personnel policies, the staff refers to the policy manual located online at: www.sckans.edu/policy or asks the Director of Human Resources.

2.4.2 Appointments with Staff

Policies

For the most part, appointments with staff are not necessary. Communication with staff and students is always our first priority and therefore on a walk-in, first come, first served basis.

The financial aid office will accept appointments made by the Office of Admission for prospective student visitors and enrolling students.

Procedures

Students and families visiting the Office of Financial Aid on the main campus are assisted in the following priority order. The student is questioned as to the nature of their visit by the front office staff – the student employee and the Administrative Assistant. Questions concerning the application process, paperwork completion, or about matters belonging to other offices are handled or redirected there. If the question requires a more detailed answer or if the customer is not satisfied with the initial response, the situation is referred to the Financial Aid Counselor. The Director of Admission will assist in answering student questions during peak periods and when the customer feels a need to speak with someone in a higher position than Counselor.

On the Wichita east campus, walk-in students are handled on a first-come, first-served basis by an available financial aid counselor. During times where walk-in business is slow, the walk-in is sent to the Financial Aid Counselor on call at the time of the walk-in.

In the rare cases where a student desires to have an appointment with a member of the staff, it is that staff member's responsibility to make the arrangements with the student.

2.4.3 Treatment of Correspondence/Forms

Policies

The primary means of communication within the Office of Financial Aid is via e-mail. All correspondence with students will be responded to within 24 hours of its receipt – if only to say that the question has been received. When an e-mail address is not on the student's record, mailed correspondence will be sent. If the student is a dependent student, where appropriate, correspondence is copied to the parent on file.

When a staff member is absent or sick and they do not plan on checking their e-mail on a daily basis while they are away, they should use the Microsoft Outlook office assistant to set up an "Out of the Office" response with instructions on who to e-mail in an emergency.

Procedures

Each staff member is responsible for correspondence directed to their personal e-mail. The general office e-mail account should be checked frequently throughout the day and handled or forwarded where appropriate. Whenever possible, problems are to be resolved in the most complete manner possible.

If the matter involves the resources of another office, it is the Financial Aid staff member's responsibility to locate the correct place for the inquiry and to forward the inquiry to the person who can resolve or answer the question. Following the forward, a reply should be sent to the student explaining which office handles the question, that the question has been forwarded, and giving the name of the person who was forwarded the correspondence. It is also a good practice to copy the Southwestern staff member in question on the response to the student.

Situations requiring another staff member to resolve or which will take the staff member several days to resolve should be entered on the MySC Student Issue task list for tracking until the issue or situation is completely resolved.

E-mail communications with students should contain the subject line of Southwestern College. This subject line helps the e-mail to avoid most spam blockers and filtering software.

2.4.4 Telephone

Policies

Phone messages are to be returned within 24 hours of their receipt. Staff members are responsible for checking their own messages twice a day or making arrangements for a sufficient substitute with the approval of the Director of Admission.

When a staff member is absent or sick and they do not plan on checking their messages while they are away, they should record an "Out of the Office" voice mail with instructions on who to call in an emergency.

When working to resolve an issue requiring student input or assistance, a phone call should always be used in addition to e-mail as a means of contacting the student.

Procedures

Phone calls will be answered with the following opening statement: "Southwestern College Financial Aid Office, this is (staff member's first name), how may I help you today?

Each staff member is responsible for answering and returning their phone calls made to their direct extension. Phone calls made to the general office line are to be answered by whoever is available. Whenever possible, problems are to be resolved in the most complete manner possible.

If the matter involves the resources of another office, it is the Financial Aid staff member's responsibility to locate the correct place for the inquiry and to forward the inquiry to the person who can resolve or answer the question. Following the forward, the Financial Aid staff member should call the student explaining which office handles the question, that the question has been forwarded, and giving the name of the person who was forwarded the message. If the phone call is transferred live to another person, the Financial Aid staff member should always give the caller the name and direct extension of the person to whom they are being transferred in the case of a dropped call.

Situations requiring another staff member to resolve or which will take the staff member several days to resolve should be entered on the MySC Student Issue task list for tracking until the issue or situation is completely resolved.

2.4.5 Confidentiality of Student Records

Policies

Student records are scanned and kept electronically on a protected server that is regularly backed up. Access to information about students is password protected and given only to authorized personnel. All new employees to the financial aid office are trained concerning the confidential nature of student records. Purposeful, improper sharing of sensitive information is grounds for dismissal.

Procedures

When documents containing sensitive information are received by the Office of Financial Aid, they are scanned that day and placed into a secured, shred pile. The “to be shredded” documents are then periodically destroyed by a service employed for this purpose by the college.

College personnel wishing to receive access to the PowerFAIDs computer system must submit a request to the Director of Financial Aid for setup. The Director is the Security Administrator for the system and grants access to those who need it to work.

New employees hired into the Office of Financial Aid are counseled concerning the responsibilities of keeping student information confidential and the consequences of sharing the information to others.

2.5 Records Management & Retention

Resources

Policies

The Director of Financial Aid is responsible for submitting a timely and complete Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) to the Department of Education. The valid ECAR is reviewed annually for changes and updates and the Office of Financial Aid is notified when new physical locations have been added.

Procedures

When notification of the school's requirement to complete the ECAR is received, the Director of Financial Aid contacts the various offices involved to ensure the completion of a timely and accurate report. This information is reported electronically using the Department of Education's E-App process located at www.eligcert.ed.gov. Printed copies of the process steps and dates of submission are kept in the Office of Financial Aid. The completed PPA and ECAR approval are kept online at the www.eligcert.ed.gov website as well as printed and kept on file in the Office of Financial Aid.

The ECAR is reviewed annually by the Director of Financial Aid to ensure accuracy. Information that has changed is updated as necessary and an update report is submitted and kept on file in the Office of Financial Aid.

The Office of Financial Aid is notified when additional on-site locations are added to the Professional Studies program. These sites are typically not large enough to warrant addition to the ECAR as their purpose is mostly to get students started into the online programs. However, if classes are held at a site, the site is added for security purposes.

2.6 Information Sharing & the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Resources

Policies

The Office of Financial Aid complies with regulations set forth by the FERPA legislation.

Procedures

Students on financial aid are required to complete a Student Data Form. This form contains a FERPA release section where the student is to submit anyone who has permission to receive information concerning their financial aid. This information is entered into the comments section of the PowerFAIDs database and used when discussing financial aid information with anyone other than the student.

People calling or visiting the Office of Financial Aid concerning a student are briefly questioned to determine their authenticity before information is given.

Staff members and students workers are annually reminded of the basics of the FERPA legislation and cautioned against sharing information concerning a student’s record with anyone but the student.

2.6.1 Internal Disclosure

Policies

Financial information about a student is shared to internal offices in the instances where sharing of the information is for a legitimate, academic or financial purpose. The most common offices that request and receive financial information are the Business Office, the Office of the Registrar, and the Office of Admission.

Procedures

Requests for information are analyzed at the time of their receipt for legitimacy and usefulness. Decisions are made on an individual level as to whether or not the information will be shared. (See earlier information concerning FERPA training.)

2.6.2 External Disclosure

Policies

External requests for student information are primarily handled through the Business Office and the Office of the Registrar.

Requests for information concerning students from other college financial aid offices or lending partners are responded to when the sharing of the information will assist the student in enrolling or managing their affairs at the sister institution.

Written consent is collected annually from students concerning sharing their information with outside parties other than lending partners or other financial aid offices.

Procedures

External requests for information are transferred to the offices in charge of sharing that information. Decisions are made on an individual level concerning the sharing of information with colleagues at other financial aid offices and lending institutions.

2.6.3 Authorization Consent Form

Policies

The Student Data Form is where students give permission to release their financial aid information to certain designees. This information is collected and updated annually as part of the student's financial aid file.

Procedures

The Student Data Form is reviewed and changed each year to collect information concerning the names and pertinent information of who the student will allow the Office of Financial Aid is allowed to share their financial aid information. This information is collected and updated annually as part of the student's financial aid file.

The FERPA release information is collected and entered into the PowerFAIDs system on the comment screens in the Award Year Profile section. Anyone visiting or calling in who is not the student must be present on this form to receive information about the student's financial aid. When a person calling is not on the form, the student is notified concerning the name of the person requesting the information. The student is then given the opportunity to add that person's name to the form if desired.

2.6.4 Information Release via Telephone

Policies

Financial information is shared over the phone once it has been sufficiently determined that the person is who they say they are.

Procedures

Unrecognized callers are asked to identify themselves by their name, social security number and an additional question prior to sharing information about their financial aid. When there is a question or concern about identity, the caller is told that we will get right back to them. We then call back using the phone numbers that we have on our screens as a point of contact for that student.

If it is determined that the caller is not on the FERPA release or is not a college or lending institution, the student is contacted concerning the name of the person requesting the information. The student is then given the opportunity to add that person's name to the form if desired.