Policy

Policy Title: Excellence in Financial Aid Practices **Number:**A3200
Policy Type: Administrative
Responsible: CSSO; VP, Student Affairs
Related Policies: None
Linked Operating Standards: A3100.80, A3100.85, A3100.105, A3100.110, A3100.115
Related Laws: Federal Laws & Regulations (Multiple)
Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)
Related External Standards: Federal Student Aid Handbook,
HLC Policy Number FDCR.A.20.020,
ICCB Administrative Rules 1501.402,
ICCB Administrative Rules 1501.404,
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
HLC Criterion: 2B, 3C, 3D, 5B

Policy Statement

The College believes transparent, responsive, and trustworthy financial aid practices promote equity and access to higher education for all students, regardless of income, employment status, ethnicity, gender, or other socioeconomic factors. As such, the College strives to ensure all of its financial aid practices remove financial barriers, strengthen support, inspire confidence, promote service satisfaction, and enhance operational efficiency/effectiveness in ways that encourage students to pursue their higher education interests. By upholding these principles, the College fosters a culture where every student has the opportunity to succeed and where our financial aid practices serve as a model of excellence within the higher education community.

To ensure transparency the College shall:

1. clearly communicate our operating standards (i.e., processes, procedures, decision-making guidelines) in ways that are easy to understand and readily available for all stakeholders.
2. provide easy, obtainable and clearly outlined financial aid options, deadlines, eligibility criteria, and disbursement practices in our print media, on our website and social media platforms.
3. ensure clear and concise communication, free of jargon, making it easy for students to understand their financial aid options and obligations.
4. provide resources such as FAQ's, webinars, tutorials, and personal/group advising services to help students navigate the financial aid process.

To ensure responsiveness and enhance equity, the College shall:

1. implement accurate, flexible, accessible, personalized, and user-friendly services for application submission, document upload, application status, award amounts, and disbursement schedules.
2. promptly identify and resolve errors and/or discrepancies in application materials to ensure students receive the aid awards that correctly reflect their eligibility and financial need.
3. minimize delays and provide timely replies to student inquiries by promptly processing requests, communicating expected timelines for resolution,

delivering timely progress updates, and communicating the outcome(s) of decisions.
4. disburse financial aid funds in a timely and reliable manner, ensuring that students have access to the resources they need when they need them.
5. ensure students are informed of their rights regarding their financial records, including how to correct errors, omissions, and/or appeal decisions.
6. guide students in a manner that is clear, concise, approachable and knowledgeable to help manage their financial status and obligations; thereby, enhancing the overall student experience.

To ensure trustworthiness, the College shall:

1. employ adaptable, secure, and technology-enhanced practices aimed at streamlining our processes.
2. increase efficiency, and ensure our services are available when students need them.
3. keep student financial information confidential by employing data protection practices that ensure privacy, security, and comply with all legal and regulatory requirements related to financial aid.
4. improve inclusivity for all students regardless of socioeconomic status through our best practices.
5. provide personalized counseling and/or technical support that addresses questions, problems, or issues of access with our systems and processes.

To these ends, the CSSO is directed to develop, implement, and continuously improve financial aid systems, processes, and practices that inspire satisfaction, confidence, trust, and engagement from our students, employees, and the community.

Change Log	Governance Unit: Student Affairs Council
Date	**Description of Change**
07.25.24	Initial Adoption