

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Cabinet
FROM: Joe Nelson, Vice Chancellor of Enrollment
DATE: July 16, 2018
RE: Financial Aid Staffing – Budget Request

For many years, the Financial Aid Office consisted of four fulltime employees, including a director, associate director, advisor and a technician, as well as a student labor pool.

During the summer of 2015 we reduced the Financial Aid staff from four positions to three as part of a budget reduction. The director left. The associate director moved up. The associate director position was eliminated.

Unfortunately, the two directors we have had since the staff reduction both resigned for personal reasons. Since March, we have had two failed searches that included two offers to qualified candidates who ultimately declined, citing their family circumstances as the main reason.

As I have been directly supervising the advisor and the technician that we have on staff, it has become clear to me that our current staffing level creates an unacceptable risk. With the team staffed at three, the director spends more time than he or she should processing and in direct one on one contact with students.

Everyone knows how critical the Financial Aid Office is to the university. I recommend that we consider funding the fourth position as soon as we are able to.

Jennifer Sweitzer (Fin Aid Advisor) provided a brief statement of need in bullet format:

- By increasing the Financial Aid office staff back up to 4 staff members this would allow the office to be more proactive rather than reactive in their duties of providing Financial Assistance to all UAS students.
- The UAS Financial Aid office serves all students, degree seeking and non-degree seeking at all three UAS by processing not only their federal financial aid but also State, Institutional, and Private awards.
- The two advisors would be cross trained so there is never a delay in service to the students due to one person being out of the office.
- Some of the proposed duties proposed for this position are currently assigned to either the current advisor or the director, while some of the duties are not currently able to be done with the current staffing at all.

- The Financial Aid Director's duties currently involve a lot of hands on processing of aid. With another advisor the Director would have more time to participate in committees and planning to use the money we have available more strategically to increase enrollment and retention.
- The director would finally be able to reconcile federal funds monthly rather than yearly/biyearly in order to regularly draw money direct loans funds
- Financial Aid is busy year round. September is the only month of the year that we are not processing two FAFSAs but at this time we are still busy processing fall aid.
- Both advisors would be available to meet with students making more available times for students while someone is still able to work on processing aid.
- I would be willing to take an 11 month contract and the new position could be 11 month to save on budget cost of adding this position.
- The current Financial Aid Technician may be interested in moving into this role and then we could recruit and train a new technician.
- By creating this position it would allow the financial aid staff to do more outreach to students about available awards, outstanding requirements, and financial literacy to make our students more prepared to pay for school.

Potential Duties

- Process federal loans- currently this is considered the directors duty but is not able to be done more than once a week. Should be almost daily. We process loans from two weeks before the semester starts to the last day of class
- Private bank loans- often students need extra counseling in these decisions.
- Default management- our default rate is increasing and we currently don't have a default management plan to reach out to students who miss loan payments once they graduate. If our default rate reaches 15% we lose some benefits such as being able to disburse all loans at the beginning of the semester.
- Financial Literacy- We have not had the consistence staffing the last 3 years to provide financial literacy events to students. Buy building up this program we help our student learn the skill they need to budget, build credit, borrow loans responsibly, and manage loan debt/repayment. This could be help our default management plan as well.
- Federal Work Study- proactively track funds every pay period to ensure that students are receiving the correct amounts, not being over awarded, and that we are spending all the federal funding available.
- R2T4s- ensure consistent on time processing within federal guidelines. Will be able to provide advising to students in the R2TIV process in order to help them get back into good standing to continue to attend UAS.
- Assisting with all processes that come up throughout the semester. Such as adjusting student awards to reflect their enrollment levels and removing unused award fall awards into future semesters, transfer monitoring, exit counseling requirements, and SAP.
- Meet with students, parents and staff to help students receive financial aid