



2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 2008-2009

Report Date: September 15, 2009

School/College: Academic and Enrollment Services

Department/Program: Financial Aid Operations and Services

Person completing the Report: Susan Murphy

1. **Overview Statement:** *Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year, indicating:*

a. Which program learning outcomes were assessed this year?

Learning Outcome: Prospective, new and continuing USF students who visit the FATV website will learn about the financial aid application process, procedures, and requirements.

The University attracts a very diverse population of applicants for admission to its undergraduate and graduate degree programs ... this diversity extends to its students' varied economic backgrounds. To finance their educations, USF students and their families apply for aid from USF, federal, state and private student aid programs, all of which have different eligibility requirements, applications to be filed and deadlines to be met.

In December 2008, in an effort to provide students and parents interested in applying for aid with round-the-clock access to financial aid information and counseling, Financial Aid Operations and Services added **Financial Aid TV (FATV)** to its tools available on the USF website. This tool allows students and parents to learn about student financial aid at a user controlled pace in an accessible environment. It was chosen because it offers comprehensive information on student aid programs; because the information is updated continuously to reflect new programs and requirements as they are implemented; because the format is dynamic and encourages exploration; and because *FATV* provides monthly data on the questions most asked and information most visited.

Assessment of the monthly data feeds allowed financial aid colleagues to understand the gaps in students' understanding of the financial aid application process and then to use what they learned to make changes in the financial aid online and in-person information and services provided to financial aid applicants for the 2009-2010 academic year.



2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

- b. *Who in your department/program was involved in the assessment of the above learning outcomes*
1. Norman Caito, Director, Financial Aid Operations and Services
 2. Regine DeGuzman, Association Director, Financial Aid Operations and Services
 3. Juanita Rebong, Director, One Stop Enrollment Services
 4. Susan Murphy, Senior Associate Dean, Academic and Enrollment Services

2. Please Answers the Following Questions for the Student Outcome Assessed:

a. What did you do?

Describe clearly and concisely how you assessed the learning outcome that was evaluated this year (e.g., measures, research methods, etc.). [Please use bullet points to answer this question]

- Monthly data provided by *FATV* were reviewed to determine the number of new and repeat visitors to the site. The vast majority of users visited the site only once and they appeared to have gathered enough information to proceed with the application process and/or to make direct inquiries of the financial aid staff.
- The substance of the questions asked by site visitors was reviewed to identify those issues that appeared most important to students each month and to determine if they were using the site for information and instruction on current issues as well as for depth of information on specific programs.
- As new material was added to the site, questions asked about the material were monitored to determine if students were finding the information and getting answers to their questions.
- As gaps were found in the site visitors understanding of the financial aid process, online and in-person information and services were changed to address the understanding gaps.

b. What did the staff (faculty) in the department or program learn?

Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.

- Students and parents who visited the site used it in much the way they use meetings with financial aid counselors, asking multiple questions across a broad range of topics. From January 1 through July 31, 2009,



2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

1,995 visitors to the site asked 13,396 questions.

- The vast majority visited the site just once: of the 1,995 visitors, 1,768 signed on for the first time.
- Site visitors most often requested information on student loan programs, including eligibility requirements, interest rates, and repayment options. Also of interest was information on scholarship search, applying for institutional aid, and specific federal student financial aid programs.
- While these topics were most consistently of interest, questions about the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Programs began to appear as information became available in the press and began to build as *FATV* was updated to reflect the most current information on these benefits.
- Interest in specific topics ebbs and flows during the year. As an example, while questions about scholarship search were asked each month, they moved to the top of the list during July as students and parents began to prepare for the college application process again for the next academic year.

c. What will be done differently as a result of what was learned?

Discuss how information and services (courses and/or curricula) will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

- *FATV* debuted after the recruiting and application cycle was well underway for fall 2009. For the 2010-2011 application cycle, Financial Aid Operations and Services will work with Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions throughout the fall to encourage applicants and their parents to make use of the information and resources provided by the site as they prepare for the financial aid application process. Marketing material will be taken to all undergraduate admission fall open house events and to information events for graduate students and the site will be a resource recommended in all individual communications with applicants.
- Admission communications will be reviewed to identify which are appropriate for including a reference to the site that directs applicants and admitted to students to it as a resource.
- The deadline reminders sent to continuing applicants will feature a reference to *FATV* as a source of information on programs and process.



2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

- All *FATV* material will be reviewed by the aid office staff to assure that it is consistent with the material placed on the new USF website pages and additional locations on the web pages for references to the site and links will be identified.
- Assessment of the site visitors use data for the *Cash for College* program will be implemented for the 2010-2011 application cycle and adjustments made to information and services supplied based on the data assessment.

Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission ...

Financial Aid Operations and Services prepared and submitted a program review in October 2007 ... a copy is available in the Provost's Office. This current learning outcome assessment is the first follow-up to that report.