

2019-2021 Biennium Internal Budget Proposal Narrative

Division: Enrollment & Student Services

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals will be evaluated on every aspect of this template. It is highly recommended that the narrative portion touch on each area. Proposals forwarded to UPRC by unit leaders will be discussed at UPRC and authors are encouraged to attend so that they may answer questions and provide clarification.

Financial Aid: New Financial Aid Counselor Position

- This is a revised version of a previously submitted budget proposal.
If box is checked please briefly outline any significant changes and/or indicate why it is being resubmitted.

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Statement of Purpose: *(What is the challenge or opportunity being addressed? How does the proposal address this challenge or opportunity? Limit response to 1 page – please link to any existing reports, data, supplemental materials, etc.)*

Financial Aid needs to hire an additional Financial Aid Counselor. The Financial Aid Counselor is a professional, administrative exempt position that provides counseling to students, parents, faculty, high school counselors and others regarding financial aid eligibility, application procedures, student budget development, and debt management. This position reviews files, awards financial aid, makes financial aid presentations, counsels students on a drop-in or appointment basis, and makes informed and well-documented professional judgement decisions. In addition, this position may be assigned special projects and/or program responsibilities based on operational necessity and individual experience and skills.

Financial Aid Counselors are having a difficult time keeping up with file load responsibilities, due to:

- Increased numbers of Free Applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSAs): For Aid Year 1718, we received a significant increase in transactions and students filing compared to prior years. As 1718 was the first aid year Department of Education implemented prior-year, news stories may have caught the attention of more families resulting in this change. The trend seems to continue for 1819 as we continue loading increasing numbers of applications for more students comparatively.

Aid Year	1819	1718	1617	1516	1415	1314
# of FAFSA ISIRs loaded	As of 12/27/18 60,451	62,957	58,607	60,524	59,829	58,645
# of students who submit FAFSA using WWU school code	As of 12/27/18 32,070	33,182	26,803	26,688	26,638	26,846

- Addition of the Washington Student Financial Aid Application (WASFA) to the FAFSA.

Aid Year	1819	1718
# of WASFAs loaded	As of 12/27/18 602	714
# of students who submit WASFA using WWU school code	As of 12/27/18 135	139

- Eligibility of undocumented students for Western Grant and need-based waivers effective 2018-2019.
- The need to package earlier than ever before to stay competitive with UW and the private institutions (i.e., as early as December or January instead of March or April) which in part is attributable to the change in earliest date that the FAFSA can be filed and the need to repackage due to regulatory updates.
- HR informing us that a Classified staff member’s file load had to be removed from their position responsibilities due to collective bargaining concerns.
- Increases in administrative complexities that impact workload of our Financial Aid Counselors, including dedication of programmatic responsibilities.
- Increased reconciliation responsibilities: Pell, SEOG, Federal Work Study, State Work Study, Institutional Work Study, Direct Loans - monthly, SNG quarterly but multiple programs, not just 1; creation of CBS; Fallen Heroes, McKinney Vento, Gold Star Families book stipend.
- Changes brought about by early FAFSA – our Program Coordinator is uploading 2 years simultaneously approximately 9 months out of the year.
- Workload increases associated with compliance.
- Shifts from Student Business Office to us - exit interviews are being driven by Financial Aid via lists of students who need to undergo exit interviews throughout the year; templates; loan disbursement notifications.
- Desire to provide financial literacy programming.

Anticipated Outcome(s):

Hiring an additional Financial Aid Counselor will:

- Allow for additional compliance, assessment, self-auditing and cross training.
- Increase opportunity for more one-on-one counseling at the front desk or in counselor offices.
- Allow for the opportunity for front-line counselors to develop their skills beyond file review.
- Reduce A-Team (management) file load to allow time for dedication to program responsibilities, supervision, additional training and strategic planning.

Metrics: *(How will outcomes be measured? Please include current data points and goals. If this proposal will have any impact on the [Overall Metrics](#) included in the university's strategic plan, please indicate which specific ones here.)*

Enrollment:

Approximately 2 out of every 3 Western students receives some form of financial aid: scholarships, grants, work study employment, and/or loans; this has held steady over the years.

For some families and students, getting a college degree may appear unattainable given the high cost. Financial aid assistance can make a huge difference in turning what appears impossible into an attainable goal.

Providing prospective students with estimated Financial Aid awards earlier results in earlier confirmation to enroll. Financial Aid needs to package earlier than ever before to stay competitive with the University of Washington and the private institutions (i.e., as early as December or January instead of March or April) which in part is attributable to the change in earliest date that the FAFSA can be filed and the need to repackage due to regulatory updates.

Retention:

Having the capacity to provide literacy/budgeting education for our students will positively impact retention. Counselors assist students on a personal level by fostering financial literacy and debt management, and by mitigating unusual circumstances that might otherwise hinder a student's academic progress.

Counseling appointments are limited to 20 minutes because of time constraints caused by file load responsibility; adding a new Counselor will allow us to spend more time with students.

Counselors face difficulty meeting awarding deadlines at peak times. Late awards cause financial hardship, uncertainty and late fees for students. PC Adjusts have a 6-8 week timeframe which does not serve our students or meet standards for today's customer service expectations. More timely customer service by the Financial Aid Services Center (FASC) and Counselors will help to prevent student frustration and potential dropout.

How does this proposal align with your departmental/divisional strategic priorities? *(Please reference specific items from the recently completed departmental/divisional strategic plan and attach a copy.)*

Our Division recently completed a Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) self-assessment. According to the CAS Standards and Guidelines, "the mission of Financial Aid Programs (FAP) is to develop, review, and disseminate financial resources and information to students to assist them in achieving their educational goals from pre-enrollment through graduation."

In our assessment of Section 4.1, Human Resources, our Department concluded that the following tasks are not currently being accomplished due to lack of staffing:

1. We are unable to provide literacy/budgeting education for our students due to limits on time and staffing.
2. Would like to have A-Team (management) retreats for strategic and proactive planning.
3. In most cases cross training is not realistic with current work-loads. Unexpected employee exits create risk of knowledge and performance loss.
4. There are a number of assessment requirements that we need to implement to be in compliance with Financial Aid Program requirements. While we have some assessments, we need more resources to carry out a full assessment program.
5. We are unable to do student employment satisfaction surveys and year round employment education.
6. Counselors face difficulty meeting awarding deadlines at peak times. Late awards cause financial hardship, uncertainty and late fees for students. PC Adjusts have a 6-8 week timeframe which does not serve our students or meet standards for today's customer service expectations.
7. We would like to provide more professional counseling at the FASC front desk but counselors are limited by their file load responsibilities.
8. High file load responsibility limits the ability of front line counselors to take on new responsibilities, learn new skills; risks stagnation and turnover for these positions.
9. Student Employment should be working out in the community, meeting with employers and creating new off campus employment opportunities for our students.
10. A Federal Work Study compliance requirement is that off- campus work sites are visited regularly. Time limits Student Employment Center manager to one off- site visit per quarter—which is new this year. Previously we were out of compliance.
11. Counseling appointments are limited to 20 minutes because of time constraints caused by file load responsibility.
12. Lack of staffing prevents self-auditing and spot-checking of awards.
13. Recent reclassification of an existing staff member who assisted with file review to IT added to file load responsibilities for other staff.
14. In Systems and Operations, three staff members are constantly “putting out fires” which keeps them from their daily/weekly work. They have hundreds of emails they can't get to and do a great deal of work from home in the evenings (not the Classified employee).
15. There isn't time for supervisors to sit with each employee to go over procedures to ensure we are working most efficiently and to better understand what we all do on a daily basis. A-Team (management) job scope of responsibilities prevent them from being able to supervise and provide development to their staff to the level they would like.
16. Each one of the classified employees in Operations depends on the student workers to help us get the daily work completed. (For example, our Program Coordinator cannot process all of the incoming appeals during the start of each quarter alone and complete their other daily duties).
17. We struggle to maintain policy and procedures and updates, let alone create new ones as processes evolve and system components change.

18. Workload and staffing limitations prevent the development of quality-control reports that would assist with efficiencies and compliance.
19. Systems enhancements and research is often conducted outside of normal business hours due to meetings, files and interruptions.

How does this proposal support the University Mission and Strategic Objectives? *(Please refer to the [2018-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and indicate which core theme(s) this proposal will help achieve.)*

Advancing Inclusive Success

Financial Aid plays a key role in advancing inclusive success, for example, Financial Aid staff members:

- Administer the Washington Student Financial Aid Application (WASFA) to the FAFSA for undocumented students.

Aid Year	1819	1718
# of WASFAs loaded	As of 12/27/18 602	714
# of students who submit WASFA using WWU school code	As of 12/27/18 135	139

- Determine eligibility of undocumented students for Western Grant and need-based waivers effective 2018-2019.
- Administer the Federal Pell Grant Program, which provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain postbaccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education.
- Provide a liaison for students who are deemed an Unaccompanied Homeless Youth according to the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Act as a resource for high school counselors and community-based college access programs and initiatives.
- Help students complete the FAFSA and WASFA (aid applications)
- Aid students with their scholarship searches
- Apply for aid as an institution, to disburse to eligible students
- Provide information about different types of financial aid
- Place students in part-time jobs on and off campus
- Partner with employers to create part-time jobs for Western students
- Work with students and their families to correct and update information reported on their aid applications
- Recalculate aid eligibilities based on extenuating circumstances, as well as new information
- Refer students to community resources
- Calculate eligibilities for parent loans via the parent PLUS program
- Provide short-term emergency loans
- Assist students in crisis, not only with aid but with referrals to other student services
- Provide information to outside agencies upon the request of students to help them be considered for outside aid

- Provide emergency food credits for use at on-campus eateries
- Educate students on matters related to financial literacy

What are the consequences of not funding this proposal?

Staff burnout and potential turnover due to the inability to keep up with workloads. Increased compliance issues. See also the list of tasks that cannot be completed due to high workload (pages 4 and 5).

What alternatives were explored?

We have been hiring temporary staff to maintain our services; however, Financial Aid Counselor duties are complex and require at least one full year of working in the position to become fully trained. It is difficult to recruit and retain competent, dedicated employees in the Bellingham area without the guarantee of a full-time position (vs. temporary).

Which units (departments, colleges, etc.) will be involved?

Financial Aid

Equipment needed:

One workstation (desk, chair, computer) One Time cost of \$3000.

For major (>\$25k) purchases, please provide the following information.

Item:

Click here to enter text

Purpose:

Click here to enter text

Cost:

Click here to enter text

Anticipated Useful Life:

Click here to enter text

Replacement Cost if any:

Click here to enter text

Human Resources (Complete the table below adding additional rows if necessary):

<i>Position Title</i>	<i>Total Headcount</i>	<i>Total FTE</i>	<i>Salary and Benefits per FTE</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
<i>Financial Aid Counselor</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1.000</i>	<i>\$62,650</i>	<i>\$62,650</i>

Table above should match data on budget spreadsheets submitted with this proposal. Complete the spreadsheet to get salary, benefit, and total cost amounts. Contact your division budget officer with questions.

Operating & Maintenance Costs (include service contracts, installation costs, etc.):

\$1000 Supplies & Materials
\$ 375 Computer Replacement Budget (every 4 years)
\$1500 Travel

\$2875 Total Ongoing Annual Operating

Space Requirements:

What type of space is needed for this proposal? (e.g., private office, lab space, group work/study space, etc.)

Private office.

What features must this space have? (e.g., fume hoods, plumbing, 3-phase power, etc.)

Privacy for confidential student advising.

What needs can be accommodated within your existing space?

All.

How much new space will be required?

None; may require some construction to add or remove walls in existing space.