Financial Aid

Program Review - Comprehensive Review

2023 - 2024

<div style="background-color:#1a6b5e; color:white; text-align:center; padding:8px;">2023 - 2024</div>

Program Context

Mission (100 word limit)

1- How does your program align with the college and district mission? https://smccd.edu/dpgc/files/dsgc-DistrictMission.pdf https://canadacollege.edu/about/mission.php

The Financial Aid Services at Cañada College supports the College and District's mission by increasing opportunities for student access and success in higher education by making college affordable for students and their families. We aim to reduce barriers to tuition in higher education and providing equitable access to resources and helping students complete their academic goal(s).

Program Description (500 word limit)

2- Who does your program serve?

We serve all community members, including students and their families, who want to obtain financial aid related services and information. We help support students and families in completing their financial aid application, and also provide financial aid workshops and presentations to our community, when requested.

a.How many students are served by your program?

3,205

b.   How does your program intentionally serve underrepresented, disproportionately impacted or racially minoritized students (ie. Black and/or Indigenous People of Color; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual; 1st Gen; Foster; Homeless; Undocumented; Veteran; Low-Income; or other disproportionately impacted student populations identified in our Student Equity data, etc.)?

We respect and value differences among our student body, workforce and community and are dedicated to intentionally fostering a welcoming environment of openness and appreciation for all students that come from a diverse and ethnic background.

3- How has student access, retention, and completion changed over the course of this program review cycle?

We were in a very unique situation during 2020 to 2023 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In financial aid, many federal and state waivers were set in place to help our students obtain the aid that they were eligible for. For instance, the Department of Education waived the most verification requests for our students (V1 verification, in particular). This was a major barrier that was lifted for our students who were in dire need of financial aid during a very challenging time.

We also received federal and state covid-19 emergency grants to help our students and their emergency related needs. The grants were meant to help students from dropping units or completely withdrawing. We intentionally targeted low-incomes and prioritized students who were identified as former foster youth and at-risk or at the time were homeless with the emergency funds. We awarded over $3 million in emergency funds to students so they will be able to continue their studies at Cañada.

4- What delivery method(s) does your program utilize to best serve students? (ie. in person, in the community, online, hybrid, hyflex, scheduled appointments, drop ins etc.). How does your program determine which delivery methods are most beneficial for students?

We provide multiple delivery methods to our students and community, such as hybrid services (in-person and virtual), and scheduled appointments. We also have a contact form for students and community members to use.

In addition, we provide outreach and in-reach services to our community by conducting application assistance workshops (such as Cash 4 College) and presentations relating to financial aid.

5- What are your on and off-campus community partnerships and how are they operationalized to support students?

The Financial Aid Services department has partnerships with on-campus departments such as, Outreach, EOPS, TRiO, Undocumented Community Center, Promise Scholars Program and SparkPoint. Working with these programs allows us to enhance our services by making warm handoffs to them when students need additional resources.

Our off-campus partnerships include the Sequoia Union High School District and Pescadero High School, wherein the Financial Aid Services department assists with financial aid application workshops, general information sessions, and Cash for College workshops for members of the local community.

6- How does your program support Cañada College as an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) designated institution?

We offer bilingual services to our Spanish speaking students, and have also created marketing materials in Spanish. In addition, we hired multiple staff members who speak and understand a language other than English (Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Korean, and Thai).

Looking Back

7- Describe major accomplishments since the last program review cycle.

In late 2021, we hired a full-time Director of Financial Aid Services, Dr. David Vera.

Between 2022-2023, we hired three new financial aid technicians (ranging from 1 to 10+ years of financial aid experience), and one federal and state aid reconciliation specialist (shared position with Skyline and CSM). In addition, we became the first financial aid office in the district to hire two Program Services coordinators (PSC) to help with our outreach and in-reach efforts. Most of the new hires are bilingual (Spanish and English).

Prior to Fall 2023, we also redesigned our financial aid website to make it more accessible for our student and community.

Additionally, we also helped with the implementation of the super registration events (such as Super Saturday), and piloted district wide program in providing a scholarship to students who participated in search committees, such as the search for a new Chancellor.

We awarded over $3 million in federal and state emergency grants to our neediest student population (such as foster youth, at-risk of homelessness, etc.).

Here is a breakdown of our achievements in student success when it came to aid being disbursed:

20-21:
• Number of students served (based off from our CCPG recipients): 3,334
• Total federal and state grants offered (includes Pell Grant, Cal Grant, SSCG, and SEOG) : $4,748,899
• Total federal and state grants disbursed: $2,828,697
• Total federal emergency grants disbursed: $1,692,268
• Total state emergency grants disbursed: $0

21-22:
• Number of students served (based off from our CCPG recipients): 3,162
• Total federal and state grants offered: $6,227,286
• Total federal and state grants disbursed: $2,950,567
• Total federal emergency grants disbursed: $2,846,488
• Total state emergency grants disbursed: $148,224

22-23:
• Number of students served (based off from our CCPG recipients): 3,119
• Total federal and state grants offered: $5,508,611

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- Total federal and state grants disbursed: $3,467,858
- Total federal emergency grants disbursed: $688,735
- Total state emergency grants disbursed: $541,616

a. How did your accomplishments help to close the opportunity gap for disproportionately impacted, underserved or racially minoritized students?

Although we were understaffed for majority of the 3-year period (2020-2023), we were still able to meet the demands from our student and community. For example, over the last few years we've seen an increase in total financial aid disbursements (Pell, Cal Grant, SEOG, and SSCG). This was in large part of our team working very hard in completing student files (such as SAP appeals, clearing any application discrepancies, and updating their program of study from undecided to an eligible program). We heavily focused in making sure that our low-income and marginalized population start and finish their financial aid applications so we can determine, offer, and disburse their financial aid.

Also, having two PSCs is and will be crucial for our office as we want to make sure we are connecting and supporting our low-income, first generation students in completing their financial aid applications without any type of disruption. Also, we will expand on the opportunity in providing additional support to our targeted student population, more specifically our ESL students who are attempting to transition to a degree or certificate program once they complete their ESL courses.

8- Describe major challenges since the last program review cycle. Have these challenges contributed to the expansion of or continuation of equity gaps?

A major challenge that we have and will continue to have is office space, or lack thereof.

Currently, we have 5 office spaces for 8 staff members (Director, Financial Aid Specialist, four Financial Aid Technicians, and two Program Services Coordinator). All financial aid technicians share an office space, but it makes it difficult for them to meet with students individually including having a private and sensitive conversation. In addition to the tight space we have, we are more susceptible to contract covid-19 or other viral illnesses. As of 2025, we are expected to house our financial aid reconcile specialist (a shared position among the three colleges) and we have no available office for her when she arrives. We may have to be creative in office space when the time arrives.

Impact of Resource Allocations Process (250 word limit)

9- Describe the impact to date of previously requested resources (staff, non-instructional assignment, equipment, facilities, research, funding) including both resource requests that were approved and were not approved.

We were approved for two additional staffing (Program Services Coordinator) and a one-time $15,000 conference fees. With the conference expenditures, we were able to utilize this by sending staff members to conferences that we were unable to attend due to limited funds. This upcoming aid year, we are expected to deplete most, if not all of the funds as we have more interest from staff to attend conference. With new financial aid staff, we hope they will utilize this opportunity to attend financial aid related conferences to become experts in their fields.

As for the new staff, we are already seeing the impact both PSCs are making as they have established materials for our community. Here are some examples: we have created Spanish and English financial aid brochures, we are maximizing our electronic boards more often with updated financial aid related information, and we have reached out to feeder schools about their upcoming workshops and what is needed from us to have a successful event. These are some examples that our PSCs have accomplished in a short amount of time.

a. What impact have these resources had on your program/department/office and measures of student success or client satisfaction?

Over the last three years, we've seen our FAFSA and CADAA applications decrease. This may be due to many reasons that may include, but not limited to, low enrollment trends across community colleges over the last three years, students wanting to work instead of studying, and students only utilizing the California College Promise Grant (CCPG) due to the simplicity of the application process (normally takes less than 5

minutes to complete). Below is our data that was collected to demonstrate the decrease in a qualitative approach.

- FAFSA/CADAAs Received in 20-21: 3,678
- FAFSA/CADAAs Received in 21-22: 3,498 (5% decrease from 20-21)
- FAFSA/CADAAs Received in 22-23: 3,093 (13% decrease from 21-22)

Despite the decrease in aid applications, we did see increases in grant recipients and total grant disbursed to our students. This is due to many reasons that includes, but not limited to, students enrolling in more units, files being completed by our staff in a timely manner, and barriers that were lifted by the Department of Education and California Student Aid Commission (such as waiving V1 verification) to access aid.

20-21 Pell and Cal Grant recipients and total disbursed amount:
- Pell Grant recipients: 586
- Cal Grant recipients: 182
- Pell $2,167,182
- Cal Grant $299,694
- Total $2,466,876

21-22 Pell and Cal Grant recipients and total disbursed amount:
- Pell Grant recipients: 616
- Cal Grant recipients: 269
- Pell $2,197,262
- Cal Grant $377,595
- Total $2,574,857 (4% increase from the previous aid year).

22-23 Pell and Cal Grant recipients and total disbursed amount:
- Pell Grant recipients: 633
- Cal Grant recipients: 259
- Pell Grant $2,530,473
- Cal Grant $410,287
- Total $2,940,760 (12% increase from the previous aid year).

b.   What have you been unable to accomplish due to resource requests that were not approved?

We were approved for all of our request since the last program review (additional conference funding and new staff position).

c.How have these resources (or lack of resources) specifically disproportionately impacted students/clients?

The approved resources has shown to positively impact our office when it comes to supporting our students, more specifically those who identified as BIPOC and undocumented.

Below you will see the results of our efforts with the approved resources for our disproportionately impacted students:

20-21:
Financial aid state and federal applications received.
- FAFSAs: 2,312
- CADAAs: 118

Federal and state aid disbursed:
- Pell Grant: $1,814,913
- Cal Grant: $245,818
- Unduplicated students: 507

21-22:
Financial aid state and federal applications received.

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- FAFSAs: 2,692
- CADAAs: 128

Federal and state aid disbursed:
- Pell Grant: $1,879,448
- Cal Grant $332,558
- Unduplicated students: 551

22-23:
Financial aid state and federal applications received.
- FAFSAs: 2,393
- CADAAs: 114

Federal and state aid disbursed:
- Pell Grant: $2,153,063
- Cal Grant Recipients: $357,695
- Unduplicated students: 572

As you can see, we managed to support our disproportionately impacted students as much as we could with the limited staffing we had throughout the 2020-2023 years. We helped our disproportionately impacted students by having staff walk them through the application process with workshops and individualized appointments (in-person or zoom).

SAOs and SLOs (100 word limit)

10- State your Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) and/or Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

SAO 1: Students will be able to report their level of satisfaction with the services they receive from the staff of the financial aid office.

SAO 2: Increase current students' knowledge of how to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards as defined by the Financial Aid Office by means of Financial Aid Workshops.

SAO 3: More perspective students will be more knowledgeable about financial aid application and file completion process.

11- Describe how your program assessed your SAOs and/or SLOs.

We emailed a satisfaction survey to students who obtained a form of financial aid through our office in 2022-23. We used their campus email to communicate with the students, and we provided some information about why we were asking for their participation in the survey. The survey consisted four questions and they had the option to choose four responses, ranging from, "excellent, good, fair, and needs improvement."

Unfortunately, due to staff shortages and other priorities, we were unable to complete SAOs 2 and 3, but we will report these results in next year's annual review.

12- Summarize the findings of your program's SAO/SLO Assessments.

Based on our findings, our student satisfactory survey revealed that most students are satisfied with our services. Our baseline of 70% overall satisfaction rate was met, as we received a 90% satisfaction rate. This tells us that we met our students' needs in terms of services.

a.What are some improvements that have been, or can be, implemented as a result of SAO/SLO Assessment? Please include meaningful action plans to

Although we did receive an overall 90% satisfaction rate, we could use this data to further enhance our services.

Based on the qualitative data, some students suggested that we need to improve our response rate. Currently, we have an internal rule that we must respond to any and all emails within 1-2 business days. However, students feel that the response time is too long and would like an immediately response rather than having to

wait for a couple of days for a reply. Therefore, we will attempt to respond a financial aid inquiry on the same day, or ask the student to come and meet with our office for a quicker response.

Another area that we would love to improve is our financial aid knowledge. Since we hired three staff members who have less than 2 years of experience working in the financial aid realm, we will continue to have our staff attend in-person and virtual trainings from the Department of Education, California Student Aid Commission, and other outside entities. With the changes happening to the FAFSA and CADAA, we need to be more aware of these changes so students and our community can understand the changes and updates. This will also help us increase with our staff knowledge area, as some students felt that we should know any and all financial aid related items.

Lastly, we will conduct student focus group sessions throughout the academic years, by inviting students who answered our survey for further comment about their answers to our students. More specifically, our response rate time as this was an area that was recorded as being our area of improvement (despite still meeting our 70% satisfaction threshold).

b.   How did your program's SAO/SLO assessment address antiracism?

The highest level of satisfaction that we received from the student survey was our friendliness toward our students and community. We were able to help out our students who needed information in Spanish, by connecting them to a Spanish-speaking resources, such as our FA techs and PSCs.

c.How did your program's SAO/SLO assessment address equity?

We also received a very high satisfaction rate in relation to staff knowledge and helpfulness from staff. We are trying to further improve our culture of care within the financial aid office. We already have a PSC who is helping students not only obtain the financial aid that they are eligible for, but also additional resources that they need or may not know of.

Looking Ahead

SAOs and SLOs for the Next Review Cycle (100 word limit)

13- State your SAOs and SLOs for the next review cycle. Describe how you will address identified opportunities for improvement. Discuss how you will address antiracism in the next program review cycle. Discuss how you will address equity in the next program review cycle.

Future SAO 1: Increase the proportion of students who complete and submit financial aid applications by in an academic year by 5 percentage points, by academic year 2026-27.

Our goal is to increase our financial aid file completion so we can disburse more federal and state funds to our students. With the right staff in place, such as our Program Services Coordinators, we will conduct a rather aggressive communication campaign to our students in completing their files. We will have these results by our next program review in 2026.

Future SAO 2: Increase current students' knowledge of how to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards as defined by the Financial Aid Office by means of Financial Aid Workshops.

We will survey students who attend our SAP workshop, as want to make sure students who are interested in our SAP workshop will understand the importance of maintaining SAP and also rate our presentation/services in regards to the SAP appeal process.

Future SAO 3: More perspective students will be more knowledgeable about financial aid application and file completion process.

We will begin to survey prospective students after they complete their financial aid application as we want to make sure that our support is making a positive impact during their financial aid endeavors. We also want to make sure that they are aware of the importance of having their financial aid files completed on a timely manner. We will have the survey results by the 2024's annual review.

We will continue to address antiracism and equity by doing what we have been doing as an office. Making sure that we continue to promote our services in many ways that include bilingual services, virtual

appointments, and also making sure we use inclusive language to make sure everyone we serve and help are feeling included. Additionally, we will continue to have our staff attend professional development trainings that addresses antiracism and equity.

Program Improvement Initiatives/Resource Requests (250 word limit)

14- With an equity and antiracism lens, what changes could be implemented to improve your program? Please include meaningful action plans to improve student access and success

We will continue to development material in Spanish and other languages, as we need to make sure our students and community aware fully aware of not only about financial aid, but also the changes to financial aid with the FAFSA simplification act (expected to go live for 2024-2025). We will work with our marketing team on a frequent basis to have our materials reviewed, and also bring in students (FAFSA, CADAA, and undocumented) for student focus groups to help with improving our services.

In addition, we will submit an annual review in Fall 2024 of our survey results from students and community partners. Currently, we are surveying our students and community partners to ask them about our service and where we can improve on, if any. Our goal is to have at least a 80% satisfaction rate from the results.

Another call to action is to try and lower our financial aid incomplete files. In order for a disbursement (state or federal aid) to happen is that a student's file must be processed and completed. A student's file is flagged for verification by our office (either federal or institutional). Below you will see data of enrolled students who were offered a Pell or Cal Grant, but had incomplete files:

20-21:
Incomplete files: 80

21-22:
Incomplete files: 115

22-23:
Incomplete files: 90

With our new PSCs in place, our goal is to increase our Pell and Cal Grant recipient total by 5% each year until our next program review in 2026. We will conduct a lot of in-reach communication to our students by emailing, texting, and calling these students to complete their files, and also requesting time from professors in conducting 5-minute financial aid presentations. This will help with the campus' educational master plan (EMP) to increase completed files for the foreseeable future.

15- How will you address the opportunities for improvement that you identified throughout the prior sections of this Program Review?

We will regularly check-in as a team on a monthly basis with staff meetings and also meeting with the FA Director on a bi-weekly basis to address challenges that need to be addressed.

a. What additional antiracism training do you/your program need in the upcoming year?

Have staff attend the antiracism, equity training that our campus holds at least once a semester, and also sending some of our staff to an NCORE (National Conference on Race and Ethnicity) conference that occurs every summer.

b.   What research or training will you need to accomplish these plans?

We will attend any district wide trainings that focuses on antiracism and equity. We will also attend third-party trainings as well.

c. What supplies, equipment, or facilities improvements do you need?

We would like to have additional office space for our teams in order to meet with students, as our office space is very small. The financial literacy lab is an option, but it is a shared space and may not be available when we need it the most.

If your program is requesting resources, please go to "STEP 2: Resource Request (OPTIONAL)" and submit your specific requests there.

Non-Personnel Item (2023 - 2024)

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Program Requesting Resources

Financial Aid Services

Item Requested

Additional Overtime funds

Item Description

We would like to request additional funds to help with our over-time expenditures.

Program Goals this Request Supports

Provide additional service hours to our students and community.

Status

New Request - Active

Type of Resource

Non-Instructional Expenses (over $5,000) e.g., equipment

Cost

10,000

One-Time or Recurring Cost?

Recurring Cost

Critical Question: How does this resource request support closing the equity gap?

By having additional funds for overtime, we may be able to meet the needs of our students who are unable to obtain services during normal business hours (evening students). Also, we will be able to conduct many outreach events during the weekend and evenings, since the FAFSA will go through a significant change with the FAFSA simplification act. We are expecting to see a number of community partners asking for additional support during their Cash for College events, and often they ask for 3-4 staff members to help out.

Critical Question: How does this resource request support Latinx and AANAPISI students?

Increasing our reach to low-income income and 1st gen students will inherently reach our Latinx and AANAPISI students. Also, these students/families may not be able to come in during normal business hours or events, thus they rely on evening and weekend services for support.

Map Request to College Goals and Strategic Initiatives

Which of Cañada College's Goals does this resource request support?

Equity-Minded and Antiracist College Culture,Student Access, Success, and Completion

Which of Cañada College's Strategic Initiatives does this resource request support?

Ensure students (particularly part-time students) experience a sense of belonging and connection to the College that helps them persist and complete,Improve the financial stability of students ,Better share what Cañada offers,Be the best college choice for local high school students