

# Support Services Review

2013 Student Accounts Cheryl Coe

1. What are the primary services or outcomes provided by the support service area and what is the impact of those services and outcomes on students and other key stakeholders?

The Student Accounts department has three sub-units: cashier's office, student accounting, and student account analysis, all of which are under the auspices of Finance and Administration, and Budget and Finance.

Student Accounts works with students, parents, faculty, staff and external customers to support strategic priorities with effective, efficient, and ethical use of institutional resources, and by leveraging and creating sustainable practices in higher education for maximum impact which enhances the College's ability to achieve its mission.

## Student Accounts

The purpose of the Student Accounts department is to manage all accounting functions for student billing; tuition and fee payments, refunds, loan collections, financial aid receipting; and manage College deposits to ensure effective College operations.

- Managing student receivables
- Managing non-student receivables
- Processing tuition and fees, and miscellaneous transactions
- Coordinating collections of delinquent accounts
- Managing student financial aid and tuition refunds
- Providing customer service for account questions, Level II Help Line calls.
- Providing statement of accounts and class schedules.
- Assisting other departments in appropriate cash handling practices.

2. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present that enhance or hinder the unit's ability to provide those services and meet expected outcomes during the next five years?

INTERNAL, STRENGTHS: The results of the SWOT analysis show the Student Accounts department rated high in customer service. An aggregate high rating in customer service attests to the Student Accounts office ability to provide exceptional service to their external and internal customers. . A high rating in this area is a great example of the department's capabilities to respond to students, faculty, and staff on a consistent basis.

INTERNAL, WEAKNESSES: The results of the SWOT analysis show that the Student Accounts department rated comparatively low in communication. While not critical, based upon the responses, increased communication was indicated as an area that could be improved upon. Since Student Accounts has already been rated high in customer service, increasing communication will continue to enhance the provision of services.

EXTERNAL, OPPORTUNITIES: The results of the SWOT analysis show the Student Accounts department rated technology as the highest opportunity. Increased utilization of technology may

# Support Services Review

contribute to improved provision of services by increasing process efficiency.

EXTERNAL, THREATS: Overall, the results of the SWOT analysis show the Student Accounts department greatest threat is budget cuts and funding, with budget cuts as the most dire. According to the data, budget cuts seemed to be of particular interest to SWOT participants.

3. Using the answers to the first two questions, what improvements to primary services and/or intended outcomes will occur during the next five years?

The Student Accounts department will begin to identify issues surrounding “communication” as it pertains to the department’s effort in managing all accounting functions for student billing; tuition and fee payments, refunds, loan collections, financial aid receipting; and managing college deposits.

The SWOT results are helpful, but not meaningful enough to establish a comprehensive improvement plan. The data does provide some direction about how efforts might be concentrated since 30% of the responses indicated “payment deadlines” could be communicated better. Additionally, 20% of the responses indicate the department lacks department meetings and communication between departments could be improved. The Student Accounts department has the ability to specifically address issues concerning payment deadlines. All staff in Student Accounts will participate in identifying payment deadlines issues and solutions. Student Accounts will need to determine if in fact there are college-wide issues with regard to the payment deadlines. This can be achieved by testing (perform a comprehensive analysis) to see if the SWOT data may have been skewed, or if the data is representative of a true problem from both the student perspective, the non-student perspective.

In 2012, data shows that the stated goals identified in the “mini-improvement” plan and submitted to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Accountability (OIEA) had been achieved. The goal was to increase the number of payment plans established and paid online vs. inline (face-to-face). Since offering payment plans through Online Services in May 2009:

- 65% of payment plans were established online in Fiscal Year 2010
- 70% in Fiscal Year 2011, and
- 71% in Fiscal Year 2012

Although a concerted effort will support the identification of payment deadlines issues and solutions, such forums can have a two-fold outcome; student and employee engagement. A well-structured communication plan is a must to any improvement plan. Student Accounts managers and supervisors will have the opportunity to communicate with their project team members on a regular basis. These types of communication will include regular status reports, scheduled department meetings, monthly updates, or regularly scheduled campus updates on the project.

4. How will the unit measure the extent to which planned improvements have resulted in better service or intended outcomes for students or other key stakeholders?

# Support Services Review

| Improvement   | Measure  | Baseline   | Target  | Current   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| At this time, the Student Accounts department is in the preliminary stages of developing an improvement plan. | Additional research is necessary to identify measurable objectives; a communication plan will be included. | Baseline data will be based on measurable objectives, not yet defined (plan in progress) | At this time, the Student Accounts department is in the preliminary stages of developing an improvement plan. | At this time, the Student Accounts department is in the preliminary stages of developing an improvement plan. |
|   |  |  |   |   |
|   |  |  |   |   |
|   |  |  |   |   |
|   |  |  |   |   |

5. How will the planned improvements align with and contribute to the Mission and Intended Outcomes of Austin Community College?

At this time, the Student Accounts department is in the preliminary stages of developing an improvement plan. Such planning efforts will be the responsibility of the Student Accounts Director, and will be assisted by her management staff. Additional efforts will be guided by a process improvement plan effort currently underway in the Finance and Budget office. Appropriate resources will be allocated once the plan is established.

Ultimately, any improvement plan will be based on the department's core business processes which have been derived to support the College's strategic priorities with effective, efficient, and ethical use of institutional resources, and by leveraging and creating, sustainable practices in higher education for maximum impact.