Planned Project Kickoff

Target Completion

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1: Project Goal

A: The 2011 Noel Levitz (SSI) showed that USF Financial Aid Services was very slightly under national data for the statement "Financial aid counselors are helpful." The updated goal of this Action Project is to assist in continued improvements in the overall student service experience and educate students on opportunities available to assist in their financial process for attending USF. Our goal is to increase the satisfaction of this group of students in order to better aid in the servicing of students seeking help in Financial Aid Services, and formalize a process of using data and putting it to use in the continued quality improvement efforts in Financial Aid Services. It is hoped that increased satisfaction and the results of the customer service improvements will result in increased improvements on the next Student Satisfaction Inventory.

2: Reasons For Project

A: There are two distinct reasons why we are undertaking this Action Project now. The first reason is that in our most recent Systems Appraisal there were many opportunities for USF as a whole to "utilize" the data it collects, once it has been collected. The second reason is it is essential for USF Financial Aid Services to continually improve student services and satisfaction and strive to increase the ratings in relationship to the national norms. Financial assistance has, by all survey accounts, continued to stay a primary reason for recruitment and retention. With increased competition in student recruiting and the overall importance in retention efforts it is essential that Financial Aid Services be a proactive component in this process.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The departments most involved in this Action Project will be Financial Aid Services, Academic and Information Support Services and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Once the data is obtained and analyzed the information will be shared and reviewed with Admissions, Business Office, Academic Advising and Registrar. We anticipate that the groups most affected by this project will be prospective students and continuing undergraduate and graduate students at USF.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: This project is to assist Financial Aid Services in increasing student satisfaction and customer services by measuring student usage and data gathered in student responses. The data collected will be evaluated to improve communications and information in hopes to clarify how Financial Aid Services could be more helpful to students. In addition, we hope to initiate a strategy to make the necessary adjustments as needed and quantify the necessary resources to make this happen.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Financial Aid Services began the first phase of the project in November 15, 2011 to quantify and assess the current activities performed in communication for both prospective and continuing students. During Spring – Summer 2012, information will be collected from students and families to determine what understanding and use of portal information is being done to assist in the financial aid process. In Fall 2012, moving into phase two, communications will be updated and improved, using collected information from phase one, and create a direct student response option to assess student satisfaction and areas still in need of assistance.
improvement will be put into place and data collected for the following Spring and Summer 2013 semesters. This will complete the cycle and the results assessed during the next SSI.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: It is our initial plan to individually survey our customers/students after interactions with Financial Aid Services to determine if the methods/improvements we have put into place have had the intended results. The data collected will be evaluated to improve communications and information in hopes to clarify how Financial Aid Services could be more helpful to students. This monitoring should give on-going feedback that can be used to adjust our strategies going forward and help achieve notable improvement prior to the next SSI. Measuring the number of student areas of access and initial student responses will give us baseline data to measure against for future years.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: The overall outcome of this initiative will be measured by increased student satisfaction and, as a result, improve the results on the next SSI or similar student response data. While the timing of the next SSI may not coincide with the intended conclusion of this project the data collected may be used to analyze if students perceive that “Financial aid counselors are helpful.” Successful completion of our goals will be evidenced in improved student response data and in turn may have an impact on the next SSI survey. All-in-all, if we can answer the question “How can Financial Aid Counselors be more helpful?”, we will have achieved great success.