

Program Review  
Financial Aid Office  
Fall 2007

Area 1. CURRICULUM (*if applicable*)

**Course Development**

- 1.1 The curriculum supports the educational objectives of the program/discipline. New and revised courses address changes in the discipline or industry and specifically address student needs.**

N/A

**Course Revision**

- 1.2 All courses are reviewed within a six-year cycle per Title 5, Section 55210(b)(3).**

N/A

**Other Curriculum Matters**

- 1.3.1 Courses which have not been taught within a three-year academic period are obsolete and have been removed from the college catalog. Courses which have not been taught within a two-year academic period are inactive and have been identified.**

N/A

- 1.4 Where appropriate, courses address issues related to diversity and/or multicultural perspectives.**

N/A

**Program Development and Revision**

- 1.5 New programs developed during the period under review meet students' needs and are consistent with the college mission and ILOs.**

N/A

- 1.6 Existing programs are revised as needed.**

1.7 N/A

**Instruction**

- 1.7 Courses are taught within the parameters described in the outline of record.**

N/A

- 1.8 Faculty and staff provide innovative strategies to meet student needs and staff development supports the development of these strategies.**

N/A

### **Scheduling**

- 1.9 Course scheduling provides students with reasonable access to meet their educational objectives and promotes strong enrollment patterns.**

N/A

### **Course and Program Support**

- 1.10 Faculty and staff are familiar with and work closely with other Student Services and Academic Affairs faculty and staff in program development and student referral.**

N/A

- 1.11 Recent developments in instructional technology have been incorporated into courses and student support services consistent with the objectives of the programs and services.**

N/A

### **Articulation**

- 1.12 Courses are articulated with institutions of higher education and local high schools.**

N/A

### **College Mission**

- 1.13 The courses and/or program meet one or more of the primary goals articulated in the College Mission Statement.**

N/A

- 1.14 The courses and/or program meet one or more of the college's ILOs.**

N/A

- 1.15 The courses and/or program are consistent with plans articulated in the Educational Master Plan.**

N/A

## **Area 2. STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

- 2.1 The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission and appropriate to its programs and follows practices that are consistent with those policies.**

N/A

- 2.2 The institution provides all prospective and currently enrolled students with current and accurate information about its programs, admissions policies, graduation requirements, social and academic policies, and refund policies, student conduct standards, and complaint and grievance procedures.**

The Financial Aid Office provides several mediums for students to access financial aid information. Basic information is published in the college catalog and class schedule, and intermediate information can be found in the *Financial Aid Handbook* (Appendix A) and the *Fund Your Future* guide (Appendix B), both of which are readily available from the Financial Aid Office.

We have recently introduced Financial Aid TV on the Financial Aid website, which provides information via video. The videos are in question/answer format and give students the opportunity to watch clips applicable to their own financial aid situation. Our plan is to add and enhance Financial Aid TV videos as they become available from College Media Solutions. Included on the Financial Aid TV site is a quiz that reviews the information provided on the videos to ensure student understanding of the content.

We distribute a range of state and federal publications designed to increase student awareness and provide accurate information about Financial Aid programs.

The Financial Aid Office is open Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Staff are available during these times both in person and on the phone to provide information on financial aid programs.

Prospective students can access general financial aid information through the [avc.edu](http://avc.edu) website. In addition, current financial aid students can access their personal financial aid record through the myAVC portal.

We also provide information at our various workshops and through outreach efforts as described in Area 7.

Our current communication plan consists of a series of letters mailed to students, including basic letters such as a welcome letter, a follow up letter, an offer of financial aid letter and a satisfactory academic progress letter as well as letters specific to students' financial aid situations. Due to increasing printing and mailing costs and the inaccuracy of address information, our goal for the future is to deliver these communications via email.

### **2.3 The program identifies the educational support needs of its student population and provides appropriate services to address those needs.**

The Financial Aid Mission: Recognizing we are here for the students, we are committed to the prompt delivery of student financial aid. We strive to provide quality service to students, the community and our colleagues with integrity and compassion. We encourage development of teamwork, cooperation and innovation as well as the pursuit of increased knowledge.

We are dedicated to helping students fulfill their academic goals by assisting them with their financial needs. In addition to gaining access to financial aid, we will

strive to ensure students have an understanding of the financial aid process, and the relationship between financial aid and student academic success.

Our staff are knowledgeable about other programs and services available on campus and refers students to these services when appropriate. Other services include:

- Disabled Student Services
- Extended Opportunity Programs and Services
- GED
- Transfer Center
- Career Center
- Job Placement
- Student Development
- Counseling, Student Transition and Retention
- Assessment
- California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids
- Outreach
- Learning Center
- Enrollment Services

We understand the importance of these services to our financial aid students and would like to expand and improve our coordination with these areas.

Federal financial aid regulations require that students maintain satisfactory academic progress toward their educational goals. These standards include qualitative and quantitative measures. A copy of Antelope Valley College Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy is included (Appendix C). Our Satisfactory Academic Policy requires students meet with an academic counselor and develop an educational plan. Students meeting with academic counselors have the opportunity to discuss their educational support needs.

We have a need for a financial aid academic counselor to address the needs specific to financial aid students. Students could receive counseling on academic decisions that affect their financial aid eligibility as well as their academic success. The financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress policy requires students who wish to appeal their progress standing to submit an educational plan with their appeal. During the 2006-2007 school year, we had 1,141 first level appeals and 121 second level appeals. This position would report to the Director of Financial Aid and be a part of the Financial Aid Office staff. This would also help reduce the demand on the general academic counseling staff.

#### **2.4 The program involves students, as appropriate, in planning and evaluating student support and development services.**

Students are surveyed at our annual *Financial Aid Awareness Day* and *Cash for College* events. These surveys include various topics related to financial aid. Results and feedback provided by students is used to improve our services.

Questionnaires and survey data for the Financial Aid Awareness Day and Cash for College events can be found in Appendices D and E respectively.

Student assistants in our office and in the Outreach and Welcome Center are frequently asked to review financial aid forms and publications to gauge student perspective and understanding.

The most frequently asked questions directed to staff at the front counter by students are discussed at weekly staff meetings. This information is used to improve our services.

We would like to explore ways to engage the Associated Student Organization (ASO) in the planning and evaluating of our services.

**2.5 Admissions and assessment instruments and placement practices are designed to reduce bias and are regularly evaluated to assure effectiveness.**

The Department of Education allows the Financial Aid Office to use the Ability to Benefit (ATB) test to ensure that students without a high school diploma are able to receive financial aid if they score high enough as determined by the cut scores established by COMPASS.

**2.6 The program provides appropriate comprehensive, reliable, and accessible services to its students regardless of service location or delivery method.**

The Financial Aid Office services are available to students in person, on the phone, on [avc.edu](http://avc.edu) and via the myAVC portal. Due to the federal regulations regarding confidentiality, the most comprehensive service available is in person.

Currently there are no in-person financial aid services available for students who attend the Palmdale campus. Since myAVC offers a secure log in, students are able to access information specific to their financial aid record online.

The Financial Aid Awareness Day survey conducted in May 2007 found that 22% of students prefer to access their financial aid information by visiting the office in person. This indicates that there is a need for personalized financial aid services at the Palmdale campus; however, in terms of the total numbers, the need is still relatively small.

Due to the complexity of federal and state financial aid regulations, it will soon be necessary to have trained financial aid personnel to provide appropriate comprehensive services at each campus.

**2.7 The institution, in keeping with its mission, creates and maintains a campus climate that serves and supports its diverse student population.**

The following tables contain 2006-2007 demographic information of financial aid recipients (BOGFW) from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Data Mart.

**Table 1: Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Head count	Percent of Total
African American	2800	31.4
American Indian/Alaskan Native	112	1.3
Asian	163	1.8
Filipino	149	1.7
Hispanic	2804	31.4
Other Non-White	170	1.9
Pacific Islander	33	0.4
White Non-Hispanic	2257	25.3
Unknown	442	4.9
Total	8930	100

Table 1 shows the ethnic diversity of financial aid students at Antelope Valley College. The three main ethnic groups are Hispanic (31.4%), African American (31.4%) and White Non-Hispanic (25.3%).

**Table 2: Gender**

Gender	Headcount	Percent of Total
Female	5837	65.4
Male	3003	33.6
Unknown	90	1.0
Total	8930	100

Table 2 shows the gender breakdown of financial aid students at Antelope Valley College. Females make up the majority of recipients, with 65.4% compared to 33.6% for males.

**Table 3: Age Group**

Age Group	Headcount	Percent of Total
1 - < 18	242	2.7
18 & 19	1931	21.6
20 to 24	2948	33.0
25 to 29	1261	14.1
30 to 34	745	8.3
35 to 39	561	6.3
40 to 49	837	9.4
50 +	391	4.4
Unknown	14	0.2
Total	8930	

Table 3 shows financial aid recipients by age group. The majority (68.7%) are between 18 and 29 with the 20-24 age group accounting for the highest number of students (33%).

We currently provide materials and/or financial aid presentations for the following events:

- International Heritage Festival
- Festival de las Americas
- Dia de los Muertos
- AV Migrant Education Program
- Foster Youth Workshops
- El Nido presentations
- Tamale Festival
- Black History Month Events
- Salute to Youth
- Grace Resources
- USHINDI
- High School Orientations

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available in English and Spanish both in printed material (Appendix F) and on the web. The state *I Can Afford College* website is available in both English and Spanish. Our annual *Cash for College* event also includes financial aid information sessions in English and Spanish.

We currently employ one hourly staff member who is fluent in Spanish. We would like to have a permanent full-time bilingual staff member.

**2.8 The institution supports a co-curricular environment that fosters intellectual, ethical, and personal development for all of its students and encourages personal and civic responsibility.**

N/A

**2.9 Student records are maintained permanently, securely, and confidentially, with provision for secure back up of all files, regardless of the form in which those files are maintained.**

Federal regulations require the Financial Aid Office to keep student records for a minimum of four years. Since we are required to collect confidential information such as tax returns, INS documents, social security cards, birth certificates, high school diplomas, and GED's, we maintain a separate file on each financial aid applicant. Prior to the 2005-2006 aid year, we maintained all files in paper format. Document imaging was implemented in the 2005-2006 aid year and has since allowed us to keep our financial aid records in electronic format. Due to space limitations, some paper files are kept in the Financial Aid Office and older files are kept in a storage unit near the maintenance area.

Filing cabinets are locked at night. However, the front counter area has no locking drawers to secure confidential paperwork at the front counter.

We use Department of Education software to download student financial aid records from the federal processor. The records from the Department of Education are then uploaded into the Banner financial aid module. This is where students' FAFSA information, verification results, correspondence records, and disbursement transactions are maintained. Banner is backed up every night.

**2.10 The program systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy, and effectiveness of its student services and uses the results of the evaluation as a basis for improvement.**

We use the feedback from Cash for College surveys and Financial Aid Awareness Day surveys to evaluate financial aid services. Review and evaluation is ongoing at weekly staff meetings where we discuss issues and concerns that have arisen during the week. Process improvements are discussed and implemented. Annual goals are developed and reviewed to improve processes.

Since state and federal financial aid is heavily regulated and financial aid rules and regulations frequently change, the staff must attend conferences and workshops on a regular basis. Information gathered at these events is brought back so that we can implement policy and procedure changes in a timely manner in order to stay in compliance.

The information from this program review along with other planning documents will be used during our annual goal setting process.



## **2. A Summary of findings and significances**

Over recent years the Financial Aid Office has seen a steady increase in financial aid applications; due to both an increase in enrollment and the continued success of outreach events such as Cash for College and Financial Aid Awareness Day. The inception of special state aid programs has also led to an increased demand for financial aid at AVC.

The Financial Aid Office provides multiple methods for students to obtain both personal and general information relating to financial aid, and also maintains a diligent communication plan to keep students informed and up-to-date. Our goal to replace our primary communication method from letters to emails is currently being explored.

Student evaluation of the Financial Aid Office is conducted regularly and feedback is used to enhance our services.

There are currently no onsite financial aid services available at the Palmdale campus; however online services are available for all AVC students.

The Financial Aid Office maintains services which support our diverse student population, with information being provided in multiple languages and staff support available to accommodate Spanish speaking students.

Student records are maintained in a secure and confidential manner with the use of locked filing cabinets for paperwork, and protected electronic files which are regularly backed-up.

## **2. B List of major recommendations**

1. Move toward modifying college policy on communication methods with students to allow the Financial Aid Office to use email as a primary mode of contact. Our current goal is to be using the email system before the commencement of the 08-09 aid year.

## **Area 3. PROGRAM AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **3.1 Expectations for PLOs and SLOs are clearly articulated and are used in assessing the effectiveness of the program and service provided.**

The Financial Aid Office was first introduced to the concept of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) in 2004. Staff members had the opportunity to attend training sessions on SLOs at financial aid conferences, meetings and workshops sponsored by the CCC Chancellors' Office and California Community Colleges Student Financial Aid Administrator's Association (CCCSFAA).

SLOs for the Financial Aid Office were developed during several staff meetings throughout 2004 and 2005. Our first SLOs were finalized during 2005.

The College's ILO 2 "*Value and apply lifelong learning skills required for employment, basic skills, transfer education, and personal development*", was the basis for creating SLOs 1 and 2.

- **SLO 1** Students will demonstrate an increased awareness of their rights and responsibilities as a student loan borrower.

**Program Activity**

Administer loan default management plan including exit loan counseling and delinquent borrower follow-up.

**Evaluation/Assessment**

Loan default rate will stay within an acceptable parameter  
Monitor attendance and loan entrance and exit counseling

- **SLO 2** Students will understand the importance of developing an educational plan and following it.

**Program Activity**

Request all financial aid students get an educational plan by the end of their first semester.

Require an educational plan of all students who request an appeal of their financial aid academic standing.

**Evaluation/Assessment**

Increase number of financial aid students with educational plans.  
Survey students.

The College's ILO 4 "*Solve problems using oral and written communication, critical thinking and listening skills, planning and decision-making skills, information literacy, and a variety of technologies*", was the basis for creating SLOs 3 and 4.

- **SLO 3** Students applying for FA will learn to access the AVC Financial Aid web site to obtain financial aid forms and information regarding financial aid.

**Program Activity**

Provide direction to AVC Financial Aid web site through letters sent to students instructing them to myAVC and the web site to obtain forms and information related to financial aid.

**Evaluation/Assessment**

Number of student requesting paper forms will decrease. Number of hits on the web to obtain forms and look at financial aid information will increase.

- **SLO 4** Students will increase awareness of financial aid rules and policies.

**Program Activity**

Provide financial aid orientation in person and on the web.

Completion of orientation is strongly encouraged before students complete their financial aid file.

**Evaluation/Assessment**

Confirmation from students that they have completed orientation and understand the material.

Survey students.

Since their development in fall 2005, we have used financial aid SLOs consistently in the assessment of the effectiveness of our services. We are always seeking and developing new ways to enhance our communication to students and to increase their understanding of the financial aid process.

Several student learning based communication enhancements related to our SLOs have been developed and implemented since 2005.

**SLO 1**

The Financial Aid Office offers exit loan counseling sessions in person but has not yet developed a measuring tool to assess the effectiveness of this service. Since it is difficult for many of our students to attend these sessions in person, we utilized an online loan exit counseling product provided by our student loan guarantee agency, Edfund. This product, called Edtest, provides loan exit counseling online and funnels all student borrowers to one, easy to understand web site, to e-sign a master promissory note.

To help increase student understanding of the loan process, we also created a PowerPoint presentation and slide handouts (Appendix G). Students were instructed using these materials on how to complete the e-sign process. As a result, the number of students calling or visiting the Financial Aid Office with questions regarding this matter has decreased dramatically.

**SLOs 3 and 4**

The Financial Aid Office provides information on the financial aid processes and policies in paper and electronic format. We direct students through the use of letters and emails to the online information and forms provided on [avc.edu](http://avc.edu) and the myAVC portal.

Students are instructed to watch the Financial Aid TV video clips and read the Financial Aid Handbook in order to complete the associated quiz, the assessment for the SLO. The quiz requires that all questions are answered correctly. When a student answers a question incorrectly, they are instantly provided with a tutorial and an opportunity to answer the question again. This process continues until all the questions are answered correctly and the student completes the quiz. To date, 4,374 have successfully completed the financial aid quiz.

The success of Financial Aid TV has been phenomenal since its debut in April 2007. From April 2007 to September 2007, 16,820 video clips have been viewed.

The Financial Aid TV Data Report provided by College Media Solutions details the Financial Aid TV usage (Appendix H).

When surveyed in May 2007, just one month after Financial Aid TV and quiz was debuted, 22% of students surveyed said they had viewed the Financial Aid TV videos. Of the 22% who viewed the videos, 86% said they were helpful. Thirty percent said they had taken the financial aid quiz. Of those, 81% said it was helpful (Appendix D).

### **3.2 Student evaluations are an integral part of the assessment of program effectiveness.**

Since 2004 the Financial Aid Office has held an annual Cash for College event. Approximately 1,500 current students, prospective students, and parents have attended to learn information about financial assistance available for college. This event is in conjunction with the California Student Aid Commission's (CSAC) annual Cash for College campaign. At the end of the event students are asked to complete a Cash for College student exit evaluation (Appendix E). Students submitting the evaluation are entered into a \$1,000 scholarship drawing. We collect the evaluations and tally the results before sending them to the California Student Aid Commission. This information is used to assess, evaluate, and improve the annual Cash for College event. In addition, the results are used to better understand our student and prospective student population in order to improve our day to day operations.

May is the California Community Colleges' Financial Aid Awareness Month. In Spring 2007, the Financial Aid Office developed a survey (Appendix D) to assess program effectiveness and provide a basis for program enhancement. To encourage the maximum number of students to complete the survey, we integrated it into our annual Financial Aid Awareness Month event held in the Library Plaza. An announcement was sent to all students via myAVC encouraging them to complete the survey online. Once completed, students were presented with a coupon for a free pizza lunch provided at the event. Students were also provided the opportunity to complete the survey in person on the day. The Office of Institutional Research reported that the financial aid survey received the highest response rate (716 completed surveys) of any survey submitted through their office.

The following information and ideas for improvement have come from the survey results:

Since students are quite diverse in the way that they best learn material, it is important to provide multiple means of communication and information. When surveyed about how they most often access their FA information, the two highest responses were through myAVC (36%) and visiting the Financial Aid Office (22%).

Although many students use the myAVC services, there is still a great need for one-on-one contact. When asked if they had ever visited the Financial Aid Office, 70% said yes. Of those, 90% said the visit was helpful. When asked if they had ever received one-on-one service from their financial aid technician, 40% of students said they had. Of those, 87% said it was helpful.

When surveyed in May 2007, 74% of students said that financial aid was essential for them to attend college. However, only 46% of students said they had applied for financial aid for the upcoming year. We need to find ways to encourage more students to apply for financial aid by our annual priority deadline of March 2. This will be reviewed by the staff as we refine and develop our PLOs.

Twelve percent of students are still using the paper FAFSA method of applying for financial aid. For the 2008-2009 financial aid year, the Department of Education will no longer be providing paper FAFSA applications to schools. We need to work on ways to provide assistance in applying for financial aid using the online FAFSA for this population of students. This also will be reviewed for possible PLOs for next year.

### **3.3 Job placement data are an integral part of the assessment for the effectiveness of vocational programs.**

N/A

### **3. A Summary of findings and significances**

Since their inception in 2004, the Financial Aid SLO's have been used to establish and maintain a range of services and events to help educate students. Loan counseling, Financial Aid TV and the availability for students to access information in both paper and electronic format are some of the methods we have used to achieve our SLO's.

Students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on a regular basis with the use of surveys at annual financial aid events. Results are used to assess the effectiveness of the financial aid program and give insight into possible areas of improvement.

Surveys have found that there is still a great need for one-on-one contact between staff and students, and that we need to establish methods to encourage students to apply for financial aid using the online FAFSA.

### **3. B List of major recommendations**

1. Continue using SLO's and student evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the financial aid program and the services we provide.

## Area 4. PERSONNEL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

### 4.1 **The ratio of full-time to part-time faculty and staff provides students with a quality of instruction, and services consistent with students' needs and goals of the program.**

Although our current staff have attempted to keep up with the demands of an increasing student population, it has become difficult to manage day to day tasks and find time to implement new programs and procedures.

We currently have the following full time positions:

- 2 Clerical Assistant II
- 5 Financial Aid Technician I\*
- 1 Financial Aid Technician II
- 1 Financial Aid Specialist
- 1 Financial Aid Technical Analyst
- 1 Secretary
- 1 Director of Financial Aid

\*One Financial Aid Technician I has been out on medical leave for the past year.

We also employ one hourly Clerical Assistant II and eight student workers whose hours fluctuate throughout the year.

The position of Assistant Financial Aid Director has been unfunded since 2003. This is the number one confidential management position in the Student Services budget requests for the 2007-2008 year. It has been approved and is in the Phase I hiring to begin July 1, 2008.

There has been an 8% increase in student enrollment for the 2007-2008 school year. To meet the increased demands of our students, as well as provide services at the Palmdale campus, the following **additional** positions are needed:

- 3 Financial Aid Technician I (at least one bi-lingual)
- 1 Financial Aid Technician II
- 2 Financial Aid Clerical II (at least one bi-lingual)
- 1 Financial Aid Academic Counselor (refer to section 2.3)
- 1 Financial Aid IT dedicated staff member

The financial aid statistics (Appendix I) shows the rapid increase in students served by the Financial Aid Office. During the fall 2007 semester, 51% of the students attending Antelope Valley College received financial aid. New programs and initiatives such as the Academic Competitiveness Grant and the Foster Youth initiative require more detailed one-on-one service to students. The need to fill the vacant Assistant Director position and for additional staff to serve students has become critical.

### 4.2 **The ratio of full-time staff provides adequate personnel responsible for program evaluation and revision.**

The need for a comprehensive policies and procedures manual was cited in the 2001 program review. While we review our policies and procedures on a weekly basis during our staff meetings, we still do not have a comprehensive policies and procedures manual. The current workload demands on the Director of Financial Aid have prohibited the development of this manual. Our goal is to address this need when the Assistant Director position is filled.

**4.3 There are adequate full-time faculty and staff to meet program needs.**

Multi-year processing (February through September) and registration cycles create peak periods of demand for our current staff. The lack of adequate staffing and front counter space hinder our ability to provide quality service in an efficient manner. During these high demand times, students often wait an hour in line for financial aid assistance.

The complexity of student financial rules and regulations require each staff member to specialize in a specific program. It is impossible for one person to have thorough knowledge of all financial aid programs. Many procedures are known to only one staff member. At the current staff levels, even minimal cross training is not possible.

Financial Aid Technicians perform verification on student files. This process is required by the Department of Education and involves comparing income documents (tax returns, W2's, etc.) to financial aid application data. This complex work requires concentration and great attention to detail. Technicians are frequently interrupted to answer questions about their program specialty, to work at the front counter, or to answer general questions. Speed and accuracy of the verification process is greatly affected by these interruptions. Additional staff would alleviate many issues related to the verification process.

Despite our understaffing issues, the Financial Aid Office strives to provide a high quality service to students. The *Financial Aid Survey* conducted in May 2007 found that of the 499 students who visited the Financial Aid Office, 90% thought the office was helpful. In addition, of the 283 students who had received a one-on-one service from their technician, 87% found their technician helpful.

Awards and applications processed by the Financial Aid Office for the 2006-2007 aid year:

<b>Type of Award/Applications</b>	<b>Number of Awards/Applications</b>	<b>Amount of Awards</b>
BOGFW	10,195	\$2,860,087
Federal Pell Grant	3,888	\$8,493,271
FSEOG	335	\$229,179
FFELP	1,853	\$5,206,553
FWS	104	\$173,637

Cal Grants	733	\$727,110
Scholarships	278	\$298,962
EOPS, CARE & STAR	666	\$298,962
Total original FAFSA	9,359	N/A
Total FAFSA processed	18,765	N/A
Total BOGS processed	12,658	N/A

The Financial Aid Office has seen a 13% increase in the number of FAFSA and BOG applications processed from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007. The number of first time college students has increased on average of 11% each year since fall of 2002 (Campus Overview, November 2006, page 10). For 2007, the financial aid staff worked 820 hours overtime. Our current staff will soon be unable to meet the demand of increased applications. More technicians and front counter staff will be required to alleviate increasing workload pressure. To provide financial aid services at the Palmdale campus, additional staff members with overall knowledge and experience in financial aid are needed.

The Financial Aid Assistant Director position is currently in the budget process. This position would develop and maintain a policies and procedures manual, ensure state and federal compliance, train staff, and plan and evaluate financial aid services.

Historically, AVC's scholarship processing has been the responsibility of the Financial Aid Office. In recent years some of that responsibility has been shared with the Foundation Office. Even with this shared responsibility, the scholarship program requires at least one financial aid staff member working full time on this project. We have attempted to manage the program by having a financial aid technician focus on scholarships. Other staff members are required to share her financial aid student caseload. We are unsure at this time where the responsibility for the scholarship program will lie in the future. In order to maximize the potential of the scholarship program, additional staffing is needed.

**4.4 There is adequate support staff to meet program needs.**

See 4.3

**4.5 There are adequate staff development opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of all staff in meeting the goals and objectives of the program as well as the professional development of staff.**

Antelope Valley College's participation in federal and state financial aid programs is a privilege dependent upon compliance with regulations. We are mandated to be administratively capable of managing the financial aid programs (Refer to Area 8). Due to the complexity and frequent changes in financial aid legislation and regulation, it is necessary that staff are provided with adequate current and ongoing training.



Staff members are given the opportunity to attend formal training sessions provided by professional organizations such as California Community Colleges Student Financial Aid Administrator's Association (CCCSFAAA), California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA), Western Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (WASFAA), National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Additional training is provided by California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), Edfund, Sungard (Banner), the Federal Department of Education as well as other student aid partners.

These entities provide training and updated information on state and federal rules and regulations as well as associated technology requirements. All of this training is currently funded by California's Board Financial Assistance Program-Student Financial Aid Administration (BFAP-SFAA). If this funding source were to become unavailable, it would be imperative that the college continue to provide opportunities to attend these trainings.

The Financial Aid Assistant Director position currently in the budget process is also needed to train staff on office policies and procedures.

The college needs to provide regular training sessions for all staff in the use of Banner, Microsoft applications, myAVC, document imaging, customer service and other professional development as required.

**4.6 Full-time faculties are actively involved in the process of hiring and evaluating faculty.**

N/A

**4.7 The evaluation of staff is systematic and conducted at appropriate intervals. Follow-up to evaluation is timely and systematic.**

The evaluation of staff is systematic and conducted at appropriate intervals following the Classified Contract guidelines and timelines.

**4.8 The evaluation processes assess effectiveness and encourage improvement.**

The classified staff evaluation procedure is mandated by the Classified Contract. The procedure is properly followed and improvement plans are developed and implemented when necessary to encourage employee improvement.

**4. A Summary of findings and recommendations**

Staffing needs have been identified for both the Lancaster campus and Palmdale site. The request for an Assistant Director has been approved and will be funded beginning July 1, 2008.

Additional staff are required in order to reduce the staff to student ratio and allow the Financial Aid Office to provide more one-on-one services to students. Bilingual staff are needed to meet the growing needs of our Spanish speaking students.

Two new positions have been proposed for the Financial Aid Office; an academic counselor and a dedicated IT staff member, both of which are cited in the Educational Master Plan. A number of other positions are also necessary for the Financial Aid Office to function efficiently.

There are currently adequate staff development opportunities available to staff which are funded by BFAP. If our BFAP funding were to be reduced, we would require additional funding from other sources to compensate.

#### **4. B List of major recommendations**

1. Increase personnel for both the Lancaster campus and Palmdale site. Our goal is to receive support for additional personnel in the 08-09 budget cycle. The position of Assistant Director is to be hired by July 1, 2008.

### **Area 5. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND TECNOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Facilities are appropriate for effective teaching, learning, counseling, and/or other services.**

Since our last program review the Financial Aid Office has moved; however, we are still experiencing many of the same facility problems. As we now share space with Counseling, Outreach and the Welcome Center, we have additional privacy and crowding issues.

##### **Front Counter**

As mentioned in our 2001 review, the remodeling of the front counters in the student services lobby was not based on our needs. The remodeling made the area more attractive and appear more student friendly, but did not provide enough functional workspace.

The design of the front counter does not provide adequate space for the equipment we need. We require two monitors, one scanner, and one phone per station. At this time we are unable to install the scanners and do not have phones for each station.

While the open counters are attractive, they do not provide an atmosphere conducive to working with sensitive information. As we share the same counter with the Welcome Center, there is concern regarding the lack of privacy for financial aid students. We are unable to keep conversations and confidential paperwork private.

The counter is too deep for staff to effectively work with students. It is difficult to review paperwork and have confidential conversations due to the distance between the staff member and the student. The design of the counters must incorporate our privacy, space, and electrical needs.

Currently there are three front counter work stations dedicated to Financial Aid. During peak periods we borrow one of the Welcome Center front counter work stations. Even with four stations operating, students sometimes wait in line an hour for service.

Each front counter staff member also needs a separate workstation for working on other job assignments. These other job assignments require a space away from the front counter where staff can have uninterrupted quiet time.

The two hallways going into the Financial Aid Office are currently being used as storage areas for ourselves and Outreach. These hallways are meant for access and this storage creates very limited space for entry and exit.

We would like a separate computer area adjacent to the Financial Aid Office to house multiple computer stations. These computers could be used by students to complete their online FAFSA application, access their financial aid information on myAVC, as well as access other financial aid related online resources. Keeping these computers within the vicinity of the Financial Aid Office would allow staff to more easily assist students with online services.

### **Technicians**

The majority of technicians currently work in a very noisy area where there is a lot of traffic from the Welcome Center, Counseling, and Outreach offices. This environment is not optimal for their work. A better solution would be for each technician to have a private office for meeting with students as well as performing verification to determine student eligibility for state and federal financial aid programs. Accuracy is critical since incorrect award amounts become a school liability.

### **Student Assistants**

Due to the loss of an office to the Counseling area, we do not have sufficient space for student assistants to handle phone calls and perform other duties. There is also inadequate room to work on large mailings.

### **Back Room**

The financial aid staff are separated into two areas. This separation impedes communication between staff members. Initially the back-office was the quieter area where staff could focus and concentrate on their work. Due to the loss of space in the front area, answering phones and scanning stations were moved to the back office. This has created crowding in the back area, and has led to distractions for the staff working there.

The Educational Master Plan includes a new Student Services Building that would, as currently designed, address all of our facility and infrastructure needs.

Currently the front office does not have adequate room for re-design or improvement of space utilization. The back office lacks infrastructure, electricity, phone and data lines for additional workstations. Until the new Student Services Building is completed, we either need additional space adjacent to our current area or we need to move the entire financial aid operation to another larger location. The new Student Services Building will provide much need space and is designed to facilitate better service to our student. Unfortunately, the wait until the building is built and ready for occupancy is many years off; therefore, a soon solution is needed.

## **5.2 Equipment and technology are appropriate for effective teaching, learning, counseling and/or other services.**

There is a computer monitor at the front counter providing general financial aid information in PowerPoint form for the students waiting in the financial aid line.

We have recently upgraded our computers. Each workstation has a desktop printer along with access to high-speed printers.

There are two scanners operating in the back office. Due to lack of space and electrical outlets, we are unable to install the three new scanners we have for the front counter. Scanners at the front counter would be more useful as we could scan documents as they are received and return the original paperwork to the student.

Due to the lack of an additional phone line, we currently share a fax machine with other areas. This creates concern when confidential documents are faxed to us. We have no control over who views the documents before they reach our office.

The Educational Master Plan has the following goals related to equipment and technologies:

### Equipment

Keep computers up-to-date to provide quick and efficient access.

Equipment to support new and emerging technologies relevant to financial aid.

### Short term goals 3-5 years

Have enough computers, printers, scanners copiers and phones to provide for increased staff and student demand.

To fully assist the office now, the following improvements need to be made:

- Additional electrical outlets, phone, and data lines.
- Installation of a fax machine dedicated to financial aid.
- Improve the usage of the front counter monitor to provide additional information to students.

The Financial Aid Office operates under strict timelines. Any disruptions in computer hardware and software systems create a crisis in providing services to our students. IT systems need to be more stable and IT support must be more responsive and sensitive to our needs.

**5.3 Program support space is adequate to ensure the effective operation of the educational program and related support activities.**

See 5.1

**5.4 The safety of the facilities and equipment are reasonable and adequate.**

Safety concerns are as follows:

The design of the front counter is not comfortable for the front counter staff (See section 5.1).

The two access hallways to financial aid areas are crowded due to storage. (See section 5.1).

Due to the amount of equipment in use in the Financial Aid Office, there is concern of insufficient electrical circuits.

There is a raised electrical outlet in the middle of the director's office floor.

**5. A Summary of findings and significances**

Current office space, technology and equipment are insufficient to meet the needs of the Financial Aid staff. Lack of front counter space hinders the processing of paperwork, creates issues of confidentiality and is hazardous to staff. Safety concerns relating to the partial blockage of access points are also noted.

There is a need for improved infrastructure to accommodate the technological necessities of the office. Electrical outlets and space are limited and as a result we are forced to retire much needed equipment until other options become available.

The Financial Aid Office is required to share a fax machine with other areas due to insufficient phone lines.

**5. B List of major recommendations**

1. Review the front counter space and devise a plan to increase the safety of staff and confidentiality of student information. Create a short term solution to provide more space for the Financial Aid Office. Our goal is to have an increased amount of work space and a more student friendly front counter by the fall 08 semester.
2. Increase infrastructure and office space to accommodate current and potential future staff by utilizing either more offices adjacent to our current area, or occupy a different part of the Student Services Building.

We would like to complete this before the commencement of the 08-09 aid year in order to reduce or possibly eliminate disruptions to services.

## **Area 6. FISCAL SUPPORT**

### **6.1 During the period under review, resources have been used effectively to support programs and services.**

Currently, district funding provides about 50% of the salaries and benefits of the financial aid staff. The district also provides about 25% of the actual supplies that we use in a year.

The remainder of our expenses are funded by the Federal Department of Education and Board Financial Assistance Program-Student Financial Aid Administration (BFAP-SFAA). Without this additional funding, we would be unable to provide adequate financial aid services to students.

A new Student Services Building is included in the Educational Master Plan.

Since the 2002-2003 aid year, the total number of students at AVC has increased by 13%. The number of FAFSA's processed by the Financial Aid Office has increased by 36% and the number of BOG's processed has increased by 39%.

For the 2006-2007 aid year, the ratio of Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRS) per Financial Aid Technician was 4,691:1. The budget needs to allow for an increase in staff for a more manageable work load ratio.

BFAP-SFAA funding does not include cost of living allowances and is therefore an inadequate source for the increasing costs of staff salaries and benefits. Moreover, categorical fund for 08-09 are predicted to be cut creating an even greater issue.

### **6.2 Current and anticipated funding is adequate to maintain high quality programs and services.**

Our current and anticipated funding is inadequate to maintain the quality of programs and services offered by the Financial Aid Office at their existing levels. Due to the current costs of providing information to students, general supply needs, and correspondence, our supply budget for the 2007-2008 school year was exhausted in November 2007. With the anticipated enrollment increases over the forthcoming years, it will not be possible to meet future demands without increasing supply funds.

Funds are necessary for the purchase of new software (i.e., Appworx and Extender) as it becomes available. The utilization of such products would allow staff to manage their increasing workloads more effectively and eliminate certain time-consuming processes. It is imperative that the Financial Aid Office remains

conversant with new technology and software availability, and has the adequate funding to support their implementation.

The State Board Financial Assistance Program (BFAP) currently supports five full time positions, one hourly and three student workers.

The Financial Aid Office purchased a document imaging system along with four scanners, nine new computers and a printer with BFAP funds. We have also used these funds to hire consultant services to improve efficiency related to Banner functionality.

BFAP funding supports campus wide promotional events such as Cash for College and Financial Aid Awareness Day (Appendix J). In addition, we purchase promotional items to be used at financial aid and outreach events as a tool to encourage students to apply for financial aid.

To increase student awareness and allow us to reach a larger audience, we have used BFAP funds to implement and maintain our Financial Aid TV web site. We also purchase Financial Aid Handbooks for students who do not use our online services.

All professional training and staff development activities to support financial aid programs are being funded by BFAP.

The Financial Aid Office was granted special permission to use BFAP funds for capital outlay to remodel the financial aid area. This was required to support more staff with less space.

Currently the annual BFAP allocation does not take into consideration a cost of living allowance. Due to the increasing pay scales, annual step increases, and raises, the proportion of BFAP funding spent on salaries and benefits has continued to rise. In the 2004-2005 aid year 64% of BFAP funding was spent on salaries and benefits. It is estimated that this will increase to 77% for the 2007-2008 aid year. As salaries and benefits increase, less funding is available for other needs.

The college receives five dollars administrative allowance for every Pell grant disbursed. The total Pell grant administrative allowance for 2006-2007 was \$19,440. These funds are either absorbed into the college's general fund, spent on business office costs, or spent on financial aid needs.

The Department of Education supplies the college an annual amount of Federal Work Study and Supplemental Educational Grant funds to award to students. A portion of the funds not awarded to students can be use as an administrative allowance. If taken, these funds are utilized much like the Pell grant administrative allowance.

The Financial Aid Office strives to provide high quality services to students and parents. Insufficient funding for additional staff and office space hinder our ability to administer financial aid programs at the desired level and slows processing of student aid files. During times of peak demand, we neither have the staff nor the front counter space to accommodate the large number of students who require financial aid assistance.

Funding is required for the additional positions outlined in Area 4.1 including an Assistant Director, dedicated Financial Aid Counselor, a number of Technicians and Clerical Assistants, and staff for the Palmdale campus.

### **6.3 Anticipated funding is adequate for the development of revised and new programs.**

Included in the Educational Master Plan and covered in Areas 4 and 5 are a range of personnel positions, facilities and equipment that the Financial Aid Office will need in the near future. Our current and anticipated budgetary allowance will not support the proposed staff salaries and benefits or equipment costs.

Proposed positions not currently funded are required to address the understaffing issues. Office space, both private and front counter, will be needed for any new positions filled as well as equipment such as computers, printers and office furniture.

### **6. A Summary of findings and significances**

Current district funding is inadequate to meet the needs of the Financial Aid Office. The costs associated with salaries and supplies are supplemented by BFAP funding.

State budget cuts could severely impact the amount of BFAP funding we receive, so it is imperative AVC review financial support given to the Financial Aid Office. Without adequate funding, the Financial Aid Offices' ability to serve students efficiently and effectively would be reduced. Lack of financial aid services available to students significantly impacts enrollment growth and stability at AVC.

Additional staffing, facilities and equipment outlined in previous sections are currently not budgeted for.

### **6. B List of major recommendations**

1. Increase District budget support in the 08-09 budget cycle.

## **Area 7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PROGRAM AWARENESS**

### **7.1 Staff maintains appropriate links with community.**



In recent years the Financial Aid Office has received funding from the state for the purpose of increasing outreach efforts. This funding is used to heighten student awareness of financial aid programs and opportunities available for attending college.

Since the last program review, we have instituted community outreach and program awareness events (Appendix J). We are currently preparing for our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Cash for College event (serving 1000 in 2007) and have implemented Financial Awareness Day (serving 700 in 2007), I'm Going to College and *Foster Youth Programs*. The Financial Aid Office also participates in high school orientations in the Antelope Valley community.

The Outreach office is the foundation for community outreach and the Financial Aid Office will continue to support them on request.

#### Weaknesses

Due to the lack of staffing and space availability, we are unable to reach the Palmdale campus and adequately provide its students with one-on-one support on-site. Currently, the Palmdale site does not have a community outreach or awareness program in place. We would like to establish these programs in the near future in order to provide the same level of service across both campuses.

#### Strengths

Our professional relationships with lenders, guarantee agencies, California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), CCC Chancellor's Office, Department of Education, ELM, scholarship donors, and National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), allows us direct access to their services and enables us to provide additional and adequate information to our students.

Despite our understaffing, we are highly successful in providing our community with information on financial aid programs at outreach and awareness events. Antelope Valley College has seen a significant increase in enrollment and use of financial aid services and programs over the past five years (Appendix I). With more staff, we would have the opportunity to communicate with many more potential students and make a positive impact on the community and the college.

### **7.2 Staff makes appropriate efforts to inform the community and students about each program and facilitate student participation in those programs.**

The Financial Aid Office uses the following tools to provide information to our community: promotional giveaway items such as calculators, mini screwdrivers, mini staplers, highlighters, brochures, newspaper and radio advertisements, mailings, workshops, Spanish literature, press releases, Department of Education, FAFSA, CSAC, Edfund, and scholarships.

An increase in donors has allowed us to expand our scholarship program and encourage more high school graduates to apply for financial aid. Specific sub-

groups such as foster youth, student athletes and fire tech students are targeted for workshops designed to address their specific financial aid needs (Appendix K).

The Financial Aid Office assists Outreach in community and program awareness by providing staff support for financial aid related workshops. In addition we provide promotional giveaway items, brochures and financial aid publications for dissemination at various outreach events. There is still a need for a stronger link with Outreach to coordinate our outreach efforts.

**7.3 Where appropriate, advisory committees meet regularly and support the development of programs and services.**

We currently do not have an advisory committee.

**7. A Summary of findings and significances**

The Financial Aid Office currently coordinates several outreach events during the year at the Lancaster campus to educate prospective and current students on financial aid. Our success at these events has led to a significant increase in enrollment at AVC. Due to a lack of staff and space, we are unable to organize similar events at the Palmdale campus.

Anticipated funding could severely impact our ability to organize these events in the future.

**7. B List of major recommendations**

1. Increase budgeting allowance to enable financial aid staff to organize community outreach events at the Palmdale campus. This will provide the Palmdale community with information and guidance on financial aid programs, and potentially boost enrollment for the college. Our goal is to have this allowance included in the 08-09 budget cycle.

**Area 8. STATE AND FEDERAL COMPLIANCE**

**8.1 Program adheres to all state and federal guidelines.**

Antelope Valley College's participation in federal and state financial aid programs is a privilege dependent upon compliance with regulations. State agencies conduct program reviews periodically to ensure compliance. Non-compliance can result in substantial fines and/or termination from student financial aid programs.

In order to participate in Title IV programs, a school must be administratively capable of managing the program. (CFR 668.16)

To be considered administratively capable, a school must:

- Administer Title IV programs according to all Title IV requirements;
- Use an adequate number of qualified persons to administer Title IV programs in which the school participates;
- Designate a capable individual to be responsible for administering all Title IV programs;
- Communicate to the individual responsible for administering Title IV programs all information that bears on students' Title IV eligibility;
- Have written procedures for administering Title IV aid programs;
- Administer Title IV programs with adequate checks and balances in its system of internal controls;
- Separate the functions of authorizing Title IV payments and disbursing and/or delivering Title IV funds so no one person or office has responsibilities for both actions;
- Establish, maintain, and retain required Title IV records;
- Establish, publish, and apply reasonable standards for measuring students' satisfactory academic progress (SAP);
- Develop an adequate system for resolving discrepancies in information related to students' application for Title IV funds;
- Have procedures that ensure frequent periodic reconciliation of fiscal office and Financial Aid Office award data;
- Have a process to notify ED within ten days about important changes, such as changes in its name, address, or ownership;
- Provide adequate financial aid counseling to Title IV applicants;
- Refer any credible information about Title IV fraud, abuse, or misrepresentation to ED's Office of Inspector General (OIG);
- Submit required Title IV reports in a timely manner, including fiscal reports, financial statements, and reconciliations;
- Not demonstrate any significant problems in its ability to administer Title IV programs;
- Have a cohort default rate of less than 25 percent under the FFEL Program/Direct Loan Program for each of the three most recent fiscal years;

- Not appear to lack the ability to administer Title IV programs competently;
- Participate in electronic processes that ED provides at no substantial charge and identifies through a notice published in the *Federal Register*;
- Have procedures that ensure that its requests for federal cash do not exceed the amount of the funds it needs immediately to make aid disbursements to students;
- Implement procedures for the return of Title IV funds;
- Perform annual compliance audits.

Financial aid programs are audited annually by an independent audit firm. Since our last program review in 2001, the Financial Aid Office has not received any audit findings. The financial aid staff work diligently to stay in compliance with federal and state rules and regulations; however, we are concerned with impact of understaffing on the administration of certain programs.

## **8.2 Program adheres to all college policies and procedures.**

In compliance with state and federal guidelines the Financial Aid Office staff establishes local policies and procedures which are communicated to our students via the web, Financial Aid TV, workshops and handbook. Guidelines such as Student Academic Progress (SAP), dates to disburse and other related topics are outlined. Many of these guidelines are created with the input for the Financial Aid Task Force. This group is made up of members from the Financial Aid Office, as well as Business Services, Information Technology and EOPS. The Task Force is currently involved in improvement processes related to the communication and coordination of the delivery of financial aid funds to students, and ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations.

### **8. A Summary of findings and significances**

The Financial Aid Office maintains compliance with federal and state regulations. College policies and procedures are adhered to and communicated to financial aid students.

### **8. B Continue monitoring compliance on federal and state levels with the support of the Financial Aid Assistant Director. Continue to provide information regarding financial aid policies and procedures to students in an efficient and effective manner.**