

2016 Strategic Plan Key Question Committee – Final Report

Question(s): *How do we creatively address the unmet financial need of students? Jobs on campus? Need based aid? Who should we help first? What are the potential changes forthcoming in state and federal aid programs?*

Members: *Sarah Wurtz, Crystal Baker, Deb Israel, Brittney Gilman, Edith Campbell, Shondalin Gallaway, Tisha Langford, Jazmyn Glenn, Cat Paterson*

Summary:

Key Findings Summary

Below are our proposed goals and corresponding initiatives.

- GOAL 1: Improve students' ability to make informed choices
 - o Integrated bursar/financial aid information in the My ISU Portal and through corresponding emails
 - o “Shopping cart” for fee calculation that includes course fees, program fees, application fees, residence hall fees, dining fees, estimated financial aid, all at once upon course registration

- GOAL 2: Improve students' ability to pay for books
 - o Textbook costs listed in Portal
 - o Books can be purchased at the same time as registering for classes
 - o Direct billing of textbooks

- GOAL 3: Improve overall financial aid advocacy efforts
 - o Increased presence and voice at state and federal government levels
 - o Financial Aid unit developed within the SGA executive branch.

Another key finding: Beginning with the 17/18 Academic Year, Early Submission FAFSA (also called prior-prior year) will provide usable financial aid data earlier to help students predict aid packages during course registration.

Recommended Actions Summary

1. Convene a cross section of key stakeholders who are charged with implementing/refining each goal.
 - a. Goal 1: Controller, Financial Aid (FA), Information Technology (OIT), Registrar (ORR)
 - b. Goal 2: Barnes & Noble, Controller, Faculty Senate, FA, OIT, ORR
 - c. Goal 3: Crystal Baker, Greg Goode, Linda Maule, Josh Powers, Domenic Nepote
2. Articulate a budget requirements and timelines

Background:

It's no secret that STATE students rely on financial aid to pay for college, a trend that is not likely to change any time soon.

- Of 2,735 First Time Full Time (FTFT) undergraduate students in Fall 2014:
 - 92% filed a FAFSA
 - 80% demonstrated financial need
 - The average annual aid package including loans is \$10,905. Without loans it is \$5,593.
 - 55% qualified for Pell
 - 15% qualified for 21st Century
 - 17% qualified for IN Higher Ed
 - 77% borrowed loans for a cumulative average of \$26,136 upon graduation.
 - 36% identified as a racial minority
- Average unmet need for Pell grant recipients is \$3,508.
- The average unmet need for the students who barely fall out of Pell range (EFC between 5730-8000) is \$2,470.
- Unmet need across all categories is highest among non-residents with <3.0 GPAs.

2015 Aid by Source		2015 Aid by Type	
Institutional Aid	\$14,717,635	Grants	\$42,158,020
State Aid	\$19,981,467	Scholarships	\$13,555,238
Federal Aid	\$90,561,508	Loans	\$74,951,124
Total			\$130,664,382

While the average aid package is enough to pay for tuition, we do still have some problems. Last year, 8,340 students filed a FAFSA by Aug 19, 2015, but only 52% of FAFSA filers had a complete financial aid file by July 1, 68% by August 1, and 79% by the first day of class. Not only are students failing to complete their files in a timely manner, but the state is also on a much later award cycle than in previous years. This year, for example, our roster of 21st Century Scholars did not arrive until after Labor Day.

Therefore, affordability and ability to pay must be measured by ability to access a complete financial aid package, not solely by increasing institutional aid. Traditional analysis done in the aggregate does not fit our diverse student body.

Upcoming legislative issues also present a challenge. 2016 is a reauthorization year for the US Dept of Education and as such, the possibility of overarching change exists. Prior-prior year FAFSA legislation has already passed, which will allow families to use income data from 2 years prior on the FAFSA. This could have significant process implications since verification may no longer be necessary. Presumably, all families could upload their IRS data directly into the FAFSA without having to wait for the school to confirm eligibility. Incomplete Financial Aid files could become a thing of the past.

Analysis Methods:

Our committee—comprised of faculty, staff, and students—met three times during the fall semester. We began our discussion by brainstorming on how to increase funding for certain populations, but we quickly found through student feedback that the most compelling frustrations seemed to stem from administrative bureaucracy and inefficiencies.

We decided to solicit student feedback via a small focus group, asking students whether they approved or disapproved on the major ideas that arose from our discussions:

- Automatic on-campus job placement for a subset of incoming freshmen;
- Direct billing of textbooks to ISU student accounts as a payment method option through the ISU bookstore;
- Aid refund checks issued monthly (aid-like-a-paycheck model); and
- A greater financial presence in the Portal / Portal re-organization/text-messaging instead of email.

Staff members of the committee set up tables in the Commons during lunch and randomly stopped students for a survey. Student members of our committee chose to solicit feedback in their student organizations and residence halls. One student emailed the survey to everyone in one of her classes. We received about sixty formal responses, but had informal conversations with approximately a hundred people.

In researching creative ideas from peer institutions, we found that direct textbook billing is very popular in Florida, and several large Banner schools are willing to share processes: University of Southern Florida (USF), Florida International, Florida Atlantic, and the University of Florida. An overview of how USF administers this idea is easily accessible online: <http://www.usf.edu/financial-aid/bapp/>.

Key Findings:

Between the seven committee members with feedback to share, we found some common themes:

- Students were not very interested in job placement for freshmen. Upperclassmen were concerned that this would reduce the number of job opportunities for them, and were very vocal about needing more job opportunities with flexible schedules and better pay rates for older students. Freshmen were concerned that starting a job right away would make the transition to college too difficult. Those who had campus jobs expressed their dissatisfaction, sharing that the jobs ended up being different than how they were advertised.
 - o “I don’t like automatically giving [freshmen] a job. I think they should be considered for jobs but a junior or senior should have more opportunities than a freshman.”
 - o “No. Transitioning from high school to college is hard. Everyone is not ready for that or properly prepared [for] time management.”

- Students did not overwhelmingly ask for more money. They were more interested in improved/transparent communications from administrative areas, in particular how the offices of the Controller, Financial Aid, Registrar, and Scholarships intersect.
 - o “I guess it’s a little bit of lack of information and lack of funds. Definitely more lack of information is a problem.”
 - o “I’m not understanding the loan process. Delays, splitting loans—it was a hot mess.”
 - o “Just attitudes in the financial aid office. Finances are a touchy subject. When you’re already stressed out, the person you talk with needs to be caring.”
 - o “There is a lack of communication between financial aid, scholarship office, and bursar.”
 - o “I feel like I don’t always know what I need to pay for and why I need to do it. I have to bounce around from site to site to get all the information I need.”

- Students thought receiving financial aid in monthly installments like a paycheck was an interesting concept, but only a couple actually wanted it for himself or herself.
 - o “It is better for me to get my refund check as a lump sum to pay for things not included in my tuition like books at the beginning of the year.”
 - o “It’s a good idea but it has to be optional. It depends. A lot of times people need money for books but others cannot manage their budget, they just spend it. As long as it’s optional.”

- Students regularly read their emails and don’t really want us to text them.
 - o “A lot of times we have no notification at all when something goes through, or doesn’t go through. I am more comfortable with email.”
 - o “Send out courtesy reminders more often. And offer more help to students who are struggling, but excelling academically.”

- Students were incredibly frustrated with the delays of state aid decisions (such as 21st Century Scholars)
 - o “My biggest frustration was the late timing of financial aid funds – they came late and it was hard to find someone to talk to.”
 - o “21st Century Scholars is really confusing. Super confusing! Like I had no idea if I ever got my money and I still to this day don’t really know what’s going on. It’s hard to plan.”

- Students thought that direct billing for textbooks could be helpful for students with limited cash flow and have an immediate impact on their success in the classroom. Even as late as October, some students still did not have books for their classes. However, this must be optional, since many students choose to purchase their books through less expensive online vendors, rather than the ISU bookstore.
 - o “It would save time; it would help with the frenzy. But the bookstore’s prices are too extreme. So I wouldn’t want to buy there.”
 - o “Good idea. I have some kids in my class that still don’t have their books. I think we definitely should be able to pay throughout the semester not just have to pay up front.”

Recommended Actions:

Below are our proposed goals and corresponding initiatives.

- GOAL 1: Improve students' ability to make informed choices

In our current age of instant access to real-time information, our transactional service model is outdated. Students are accustomed to navigating interlinked information in order to gather facts and conduct business. A comprehensive, self-service consumer-centric Portal not only aligns with what students expect and are used to, but empowers them to make savvy, informed choices. Attached to this report, we offer a visual representation of what this technology might look like. It transforms a static Portal with administrative silos into a sequential path for students to self-guide through the registration process.

In addition, current email and portal messaging is not meaningful to students. Content must be both simplified, personalized, and regularly-scheduled in order to cull together seasonally-appropriate information from the Controller's Office and Financial Aid. Therefore, we recommend two initiatives related to improving transparency for students:

- Integrated bursar/financial aid information in the My ISU Portal and through corresponding emails
- "Shopping cart" for fee calculation that includes course fees, program fees, application fees, residence hall fees, dining fees, estimated financial aid, all at once upon course registration (Appendix)

- GOAL 2: Improve students' ability to pay for books

Students find it incredibly difficult to set aside alternative resources to pay for their textbooks out-of-pocket. They are unable to reliably count on financial aid refunds to finance textbooks in a timely way, due to the significant delays in receiving their state aid. It is also difficult for students to be thoroughly informed and savvy consumers, since course textbook costs are not up front and transparent in the course registration process. Therefore, students are unable to incorporate complete course cost when considering their course and course section selections. All of these obstacles have a direct impact on student academic success, since many of them are unable to purchase required textbooks until well into the semester. While integrating the below into a comprehensive Portal "shopping cart" model would require a significant investment of money and time, it would have a direct and measurable impact on student success.

- Textbook costs listed in Portal (slide 4)
- Books can be purchased at the same time as registering for classes (slide 7)
- Direct billing of textbooks (slide 7)

- GOAL 3: Improve overall financial aid advocacy efforts

The most critical obstacle to student financial success is late state aid. Comprehensive advocacy efforts are necessary. Indiana State University must have a unified, single voice when presenting issues to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE). Appoint a committee to refine advocacy efforts who will tailor informed and consistent communications. Representation on state and national committees is essential.

In addition, there is not an outlet on campus for students to express their concerns about financial aid. There is an obvious lack of formal acknowledgment of this on an SGA level. Providing students with a safe outlet for sharing administrative concerns and constructive ideas for improvement is essential. Our recommended initiatives for this goal are as follows:

- Increased presence and voice at state and federal government levels
- Financial Aid unit developed within the SGA executive branch.

We also recognize that these projects are massive undertakings and will likely require a significant amount of resources to administer. Convening a group of key stakeholders to scope these projects and present a budget proposal is the next appropriate step.

Browse

Welcome, Crystal J. Baker.

Find a page...

Home > Registration

Main Menu

Personal Information

Registration

Faculty Services

Departmental

Employee

Finance

Degree Audit

Review progress toward degree; Choose various major options

Add/Drop Classes

See available sections and instructors; update class schedule

Browse textbooks

View prices at ISU Bookstore; compare estimated costs against national average

Choose housing and meals

Affirm housing selection and meal plan (optional)

Apply Financial Aid

View estimated financial aid; apply to charges; view missing items

Review Charges and Submit

Print preliminary cost sheet; accept charges

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RELEASE: 8.8

SITE MAP

Browse

Degree Audit

Home > Registration > Degree Audit

991649903 Crystal J. Baker
Nov 30, 2015 09:29 am

Degree Audit | Courses | Browse Textbooks | Housing/Meals | Apply Financial Aid | Review and Submit

This page should link with MySAM.

1. Cross-link with MySAM and keep track of CRNS for required courses
2. Cross link to Dynamic Searchable Schedule of Classes (SSB) to keep track of CRNS for electives
3. Each class will be clickable with a popup of dates, times, description, and instructor detail.
4. Student can put classes they are thinking about registering for into a "shopping cart"

Click on each tab displayed on this page.

Select Another Aid Year

Browse

Find a page...

Courses

Home > Registration > Courses

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Degree Audit | **Courses** | Browse Textbooks | Housing/Meals | Apply Financial Aid | Review and Submit

This page should display selections from MySAM and SSB

Select a Term:

Submit

Currently Selected Classes

CRIM 490	\$894.00
ENG 105	\$894.00
BIO 101	\$894.00
BIO 101L	\$324.00 + \$60.00 Lab Fee



Click on each tab displayed on this page.

[Select Another Aid Year](#)

Browse

Find a page...

Browse Textbooks

Home > Registration > Browse Textbooks

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Degree Audit | Courses | **Browse Textbooks** | Housing/Meals | Apply Financial Aid | Review and Submit

This page should display books by class schedule

Currently Selected Classes

CRIM 490	\$894.00
ENG 105	\$894.00
BIO 101	\$894.00
BIO 101L	\$324.00 + \$60.00 Lab Fee

Barnes and Noble Price

Used: \$115	New \$129	Rental: \$68
Used: \$11	New \$32	Rental N/A
Used: \$165	New \$218	Rental: \$98
Used: N/A	New \$29	Rental: N/A

[Click here to buy your books!](#)

Total estimated cost so far:

Tuition and Fees:	\$3,066.00
Books:	\$410.00
Total:	\$3,476.00



Click on each tab displayed on this page.

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Find a page...

Housing and Meals

Home > Registration > Housing and Meals

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- Degree Audit
- Courses
- Browse Textbooks
- Housing/Meals**
- Apply Financial Aid
- Review and Submit

This page should display housing assignment and price

Mills Hall 210	\$5010.00
Flex 10 meal plan with \$204 Commons Cash	\$204.00

Total estimated cost so far:

Tuition and Fees:	\$3,066.00
Books:	\$410.00
Room & Board	\$5,214.00

Things to think about - Separate link to application to change preferences?
What messaging is appropriate for students who choose to live off campus?



Click on each tab displayed on this page.

Browse

Apply Financial Aid

Home > Registration > Apply Financial Aid

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Award Decision

Fund	Status	Term	Amount	Accept Award	Accept Partial Amount
Direct Unsubsidized Loan	Estimated award	Fall 2015	\$8,391.00	<input type="button" value="Select Decision"/>	<input type="text"/>

Unsatisfied Disbursement Requirements

Requirement	Status
Web Decision for Loan You have been awarded a Federal student loan. Click the "Accept Award" tab and choose a decision for each fund you were offered. If you wish to	Document Needed

Total estimated cost so far:

Tuition and Fees:	\$3,066.00	Total Accepted Aid:	\$8,391.00
Books:	\$410.00		
Room & Board	\$5,180.00	Anticipated Cost:	\$94.00
Total Costs	\$8,485.00		



Click on each tab displayed on this page

Browse

Find a page...

Review and Submit

Home > Registration > Review and Submit

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Nov 30, 2015 09:29 am

Degree Audit		Courses		Browse Textbooks		Housing/Meals		Apply Financial Aid		Review and Submit	
CRIM 490	\$894.00										
ENG 105	\$894.00										
BIO 101	\$894.00										
BIO 101L	\$324.00										
BIO 101L Lab Fee	\$60.00										
Textbooks	\$410.00										
Mills Hall Flex PLus	\$5010.00										
Charges											
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	\$8,391.00										
Credits											
Amount Due:	\$94.00										
Total											

I understand that payment is my responsibility. I understand that fees will be assessed approximately 6 weeks prior to the beginning of classes and bills will be sent at that time. Financial Aid is subject to change based on eligibility, enrollment,, and satisfactory academic progress and may be revoked at any time. Insert other disclaimers here.

SUBMIT