

Indiana State University

2005 - 2006 Administrative Annual Report

Student Financial Aid

Year in Review

Achievements

As you have heard, increasing public awareness of Indiana State University's accomplishments is crucial to building student enrollment, influencing policy makers, and developing a place of pre-eminence in the Midwest. What do you consider to be your department's accomplishments for the 2006-07 year that will contribute to this effort? (Please list in priority order and limit to no more than 8.)

- \$18,200,000 on-time aid delivered in the fall 2005 semester - This is a \$1,600,000 increase over the record-setting fall 2004 disbursement, despite an enrollment loss
- Creation of a new annual student service in the FAFSA+ Resource Fair Students received personal guidance on completing the FAFSA and other questions regarding financing and education here at ISU Computers were available and financial aid counselors helped students file their FAFSA electronically on site for the coming year 15 other ISU departments were represented sharing information with students to help improve retention
- Helped envision and develop with tremendous help from the Foundation Office, Office of Admissions, and the Center for Information Technology our new online ISU Scholarship Search Tool available at: <http://scholarships.indstate.edu/> Students can now research all academic scholarship options offered for new and continuing students at ISU in a single source This new tool was received very warmly by students and high school counselors
- Designed and implemented a new campus-wide Federal Work Study allocation and utilization process for 2006-2007
- Coordinated conversion to ELM loan processing system Stafford, PLUS and Alternative student loan processing and money flow are now all coordinated through one system Alternative student loan money can now be sent by electronic funds transfer to ISU This has eased administrative burden for the Office of the Controller and the Office of Student Financial Aid
- Instigated another FAFSA completion marketing campaign including ads, fliers, mailings, telephone contacts, table toppers, presentation opportunities
- Contributed to financial aid information sharing in The Statesman, The Indianapolis Star, WTHI Television and WTWO Television
- Increased participation with area high schools through Financial Aid Workshops

Enrollment

What steps did you take this year to aid ISU in overcoming enrollment challenges?

We enhanced our focus on delivering student aid as needed, when needed. The development of the ISU Scholarship Search Tool, FAFSA+ Resource Fair and our strong push for on-time FAFSA filing were all intended to improve the information flow to prospective and continuing students about how ISU is an affordable educational opportunity. We initiated outbound calling for missing documents. At the point that a staff member in the processing center notes that a document is incomplete they initiate a phone call to the student seeking to resolve the problem. This has reduced the amount of time necessary to complete financial aid files. Students have perceived this to be very caring and a positive initiative. Email notifications of financial aid file activity have sparked more students to use their MyISU Portal on an ongoing basis. We are emphasizing the fact that this is the main communication tool from our office. This has strengthened the drive to have students stay connected with our campus.

Action Steps

Do you have any further progress you would like to report?

EM: Our students have noticed our change. Rarely do we receive the kind of criticism that was commonplace when I first arrived in 2004. Our staff have worked very diligently to change the impression of the office with our student body as well as with faculty and staff. The FAFSA+ Resource Fair was a very visual and interactive positive program that involved personal attention by financial aid counselors and direct connection to 15 different departments who joined us in information sharing that day. This event may be the front page of The Statesman in a positive light. CE: We are still taking every opportunity to join our peers around campus in boosting regional recruitment efforts. Janis Coopriider again helped training area high school counselors on state grant opportunities. We contributed significantly to the success of the new Counselors Day on Campus held in March 2006.

Assessment

What are two ways in which you evaluated the quality or effectiveness in your area last year? What changes did you make based on those assessments?

On-time aid delivery by the first day of fall semester is always a key measure of our office effectiveness. For fall 2005 our on-time aid delivery increased by \$1.6 million. This is an impressive accomplishment. But it becomes an astonishing achievement in light of the great success in increased on-time aid delivered in the record-setting fall 2004 semester and our decrease in total student enrollment this year. The Office of Student Financial Aid has hit a dynamic stride in meeting its primary objective. We also closely monitor The Statesman for student opinion of the office. During the 2004-2005 year, there were multiple complaining reports submitted in the school paper by students about our office. Many of these reports were done by students who received all of their aid on-time that fall. But the Financial Aid Office was still a primary target for complaints against University based on past performance. A close monitoring of the 2005-2006 issues of The Statesman have shown a substantial decrease in negative feedback. This is not as tangible a measurement as on-time aid delivery by the first day of school, but it is perhaps equally important as it helps to set the impression of our campus students share with one another and our local community. We will continue in the coming year to put students first in our operations. We will work to be proactive, caring and effective at filling their needs.

Budget

As you know, ISU is facing significant budget challenges. Finding ways to overcome these while increasing efficiency requires innovation. How are you overcoming your budget challenges this year?

We are shifting the bulk of our communication to students to electronic formats. Quick telephone calls requesting needed information has reduced mailing costs, number of contacts needed and positively impacted inbound calling response time. Reaching out to our students saves them time and concern while reducing our costs. Cross-training within the department has allowed us to reduce the amount of overtime needed. Groups are addressing backlog needs during the day rather than having individuals stay later in the night. This saves on direct budget expenses for wages and utilities. All of our student forms are now available on our web site at www.indstate.edu/finaid. E-mail notifications of missing documents referenced these electronic forms. This has saved printing and mailing costs for the University.

Strategic Initiatives

Development Activities

What role might your unit play during the silent phase of the comprehensive fundraising campaign?

We will consider the ways in which we may be able to help seed the importance of our fundraising campaign. Our unit recognizes the critical need for additional scholarship funding and boosting of resources necessary for our university to excel. We will do what we can to help in this worthy endeavor.

Future Goals

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Have you considered any action steps your department could make to enhance Indiana State University's reputation as a University of choice? If so, please indicate what you are planning to do and tell us which area of planning your steps fall under.

EM: Our unit continues to seek opportunities to be proactive with our students and prospects, ensuring their success in being a Sycamore. We are conducting more outreach programs, creating new interaction events on campus - like our successful FAFSA+ Resource Fair, and are being more progressive in our dissemination of financial aid information to our aid applicants.