



C U Y A M A C A  
• C O L L E G E •

# Annual Update Report

SIS - Financial Aid

## Begin Federal Work Study In-reach Program - Summer 2026

**Program Goal:** Hire FWS students for the purpose of financial aid in-reach and raising student awareness of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them.

Goal:

Close equity gaps in all of our special programs, ensuring that students have hands-on support for completing all financial aid requirements. Based on our historical, and most recent 2024/2025 Financial Aid Application completion rates and Pell Grant recipients, student completion and access has decreased. These hands-on efforts will allow the opportunity to close these gaps. Beginning Spring 2026, we will begin developing the framework and resources for this in-reach program in order to train student workers during Summer 2026 and implementation beginning Fall 2026.

**Goal Status:** Active

### Mapping

2022 - 2028 Strategic Plan: (X)

- **Increase Equitable Access:** Hire FWS students for the purpose of financial aid in-reach and raising student awareness of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them.

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- **Eliminate Equity Gaps in Course Success:** Hire FWS students for the purpose of financial aid in-reach and raising student awareness of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them.

Goal:

Close equity gaps in all of our special programs, ensuring that students have hands-on support for completing all financial aid requirements. Based on our historical, and most recent 2024/2025 Financial Aid Application completion rates and Pell Grant recipients, student completion and access has decreased. These hands-on efforts will allow the opportunity to close these gaps. Beginning Spring 2026, we will begin developing the framework and resources for this in-reach program in order to train student workers during Summer 2026 and implementation beginning Fall 2026.

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- **Increase Persistence and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Hire FWS students for the purpose of financial aid in-reach and raising student awareness of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them.

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- **Increase Completion and Eliminate Equity Gaps:** Hire FWS students for the purpose of financial aid in-reach and raising student awareness of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them.

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- **Increase Hiring and Retention of Diverse Employees:** Hire FWS students for the purpose of financial aid in-reach and raising student awareness of financial aid opportunities that may be available to them.

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#### Summary of Progress or Results

**Summary Date:** 11/14/2025

**Summary of Progress or Results:** Goal has not started yet

**Reporting Period:** 2025 - 2026

**Status:** Not Started

**Action steps for this academic year.:**

Action Steps:

- Hire Federal Work Study Students.
- Student workers would be dedicated to and complete presentations, assistance labs, and answer questions for students in all of our various programs including Athletics, Rising Scholars, RISE, NextUp, Pride Scholars, UMOJA, Puente, etc.
- Create an in-reach toolkit to be used each semester to support these efforts.

Previous Data:

- There is no previous data as this is not something that has been done at Cuyamaca College.

## Financial Aid High School Outreach

**Program Goal:** Develop a Financial Aid Outreach and recruitment plan that targets high school juniors and seniors in our service area who are required to complete a financial aid application based on California legislation and are making decisions on their college selection for upcoming years.

### Actions Steps:

Submit a position request for a Financial Aid Programs Specialist to act as a liaison between Cuyamaca Financial Aid Office and local service area high schools.

Develop marketing and outreach plan for financial aid events, presentations, and application assistance workshops. The Financial Aid Office will have a resource toolkit and data on all high school outreach.

### Previous Data:

2024/2025 aid year included 3 high school assistance outreach workshops, with attendance by 40 students.

### Goal:

Build partnerships with high schools within our service area who already connect with Cuyamaca College through the Outreach Program, but providing continuous support in the specialized area of Financial Aid. Currently, partnerships with service area high schools are limited as Cuyamaca College does not have a point of contact in the Financial Aid Office that is able to build partnerships and provide support to high school seniors in our area. Our data shows that only 35% of students completed a financial aid application during the 2024/2025 aid year. Working with high school students, educating them on the benefits and possibilities of financial aid before they reach Cuyamaca can and will increase the number of students who complete applications and subsequently receive financial aid.

**Goal Status:** Active

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<b>Summary of Progress or Results</b>
<b>Summary Date:</b> 11/17/2025 <b>Summary of Progress or Results:</b> Goal has not yet started <b>Reporting Period:</b> 2025 - 2026 <b>Status:</b> Not Started <b>What resources, if any, are needed to achieve this goal? (Select all that apply):</b> New classified position <b>Action steps for this academic year.:</b> The Financial Aid Office currently has 4 outreach dates with 2 local high schools (Valhalla and Steele Canyon) in December 2025, January 2026, and February 2026 in order to support students in completing the 2026/2027 financial aid application. Outreach is currently being coordinated by the Financial Aid Director who has limited time to do outreach/relationship building with local high schools. Therefore, only high schools who have initiated contact with the Financial Aid Office will receive support. Without a Financial Aid Programs Specialist to support this work, campus in-reach coordination and outreach will be limited.

## Increase Student Access to Financial Aid Services

**Program Goal:** Increase student access to Financial Aid services, reducing wait times for file review and disbursements. Over the last year, the Financial Aid Office has made significant progress in reducing student wait times for file review and disbursement, and increasing phone and email support for students. However, this effort required more than \$12,000 in overtime costs during 2024/2025 fiscal year due to interruptions to staff daily duties (file processing, consortium processing, SAP appeal processing, etc) to provide front counter, phone, and email support to students. While the Financial Aid Office has done its best to utilize the support of Federal Work Study students, this still results in minimal information being provided to students as student workers are not financial aid professionals and unable to provide full support to students over the phone or in person. Student workers also have limited access to student files for privacy and security purposes, which is therefore impeding student access to services and financial aid disbursements.

### Action Steps:

Submit a request for a second Financial Aid Assistant. This will allow Cuyamaca College to fully support students over the phone, in person, and via email, allowing the Financial Aid Office to meet the Department of Education's requirement to be administratively capable.

Based on 2024/2025 data, Cuyamaca College enrolled 14,333 students. Of those, 4,983 students completed a financial aid application and received support/service from FAO. This indicates that each of the 4 Financial Aid Advisors on staff manages 1,245 students in their caseload. Advisors manage 3 main areas of their caseload which includes: 1) reviewing verification documents (tax returns, identity and citizenship documents, etc), 2) reviewing SAP Appeals and associated documents, and 3) Consortium Agreements. As a result, each student within an Advisor's caseload could require up to 3 separate reviews depending on the student file and needs, resulting in review of up to 3700 files each.

The role of the Financial Aid Assistant is to provide frontline support at our service counter, over the phones, and via email to provide students with correct guidance on what is needed to complete their financial aid file, or provide support regarding student financial aid questions, and mitigate the strain that is placed on Advisors who must complete review of all student files within 2-4 weeks. Currently, FAO only has one Financial Aid Assistant to field front counter, phone calls, and emails from all 4,983 financial aid recipients. As a result, Federal Work Study students are hired to provide some support with the constant need; however, these individuals can only provide limited support and often must ask a permanent staff member for support. This interrupts our Financial Aid Advisors from their duties as they must divert time that they should be spend on reviewing their student caseload, to answer an inquiry. This causes delays in processing student financial aid files.

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### Service Area Overview and Update

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#### Lead Author

Rachel Andersen

**Please briefly share the ways in which you collaborated with colleagues within and outside of your department to gather input to inform your program review.**

In gathering information for my program review, I have tracked data since my hire in June 2024. I have received weekly activity reports from all Financial Aid staff to monitor productivity trends, turnaround times for student files/responses, and number of students served/supported through the financial aid process. Additionally, I have collaborated with Bri Hayes and Katie Cabral on data including percentage of enrolled students who have completed financial aid applications, as well as, aid received by race and ethnicity.

**Please briefly share the ways in which you collaborated with your Dean on your program review to discuss your vision, goals, and resource needs/requests.**

I have worked with my Vice President of Student Services, Dr. Marron, on collecting and refining data to better measure FAO's progress in reducing institutional error, increased staff training, and decreasing student wait times and file review turnaround times. I have also worked with my VP in finding innovative ways to identify students who have not completed financial aid applications, provided targeted outreach and communication, and identifying modalities that will support students who require assistance in this area.

**Please summarize the significant changes and achievements that have occurred in your service area since the last program review.**

The Financial Aid Office has made significant strides in many areas over the last year, including:

- Went live in new Financial Aid System- Colleague Financial Aid in August 2024
- Bi-weekly staff meetings
- Students helped through Financial Aid Assistance labs
  - 2024: 491
  - 2025: 577
- File Turnaround Times:
  - 12 weeks as of June 2024
  - 6 weeks current
- Phone Call Return/Email Response Times:
  - 10 business days- June 2024
  - 3 business days current
- Pell Grant Disbursed increase of \$2 million:

## Annual Update

- 2023/2024- \$14,408,118
- 2024/2025- \$16,243,862
- Brand new/compliant Policies and Procedures
- Hired Scholarship Specialist after 5 year vacancy
- Repurposed part time Financial Aid Advisor role after a retirement into Cuyamaca's first Financial Aid Technician.
- 9 customized Financial Aid trainings and certifications for all Financial Aid staff through National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA).
- Updated/renovated Financial Aid website with in-depth resources and student-centered language.
- First Annual Financial Aid Day- Financial Aid in-reach serving 130 students.

## Student Learning Outcome/Service Area Outcome Assessment and Student Success

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### **Student Access, Learning, and Achievement**

**Student Services areas collect data in many different ways. This may include the number of students, employees, or community members served, survey results, or other reports prepared by the department and external organizations. Which data was used for your service area?**

The Financial Aid Office has used weekly activity reports from staff for the last year to inform processes and procedures, driving our performance goals and student outcomes over the last year. The Financial Aid Office will utilize data from the Institutional Effectiveness, Success, and Equity (IESE) Office to inform our goals and student outcomes for the next two years.

**Please discuss any equity gaps in access or success the data revealed. What action will the department or discipline take to address these equity gaps? If equity gaps have been reduced or eliminated, please share what the program did to achieve this. If equity gaps still exist, consider the specific steps your department will take to address equity gaps.**

IESE data is showing major equity gaps in various areas.

Financial Aid Application Completion- years prior to 2024/2025, only FAFSA completion data was reviewed. Beginning 2024/2025, percentage of students completing FAFSAs, CADAAs, CCPG Applications and any application will be tracked to monitor all students/progress.

- 2023/2024- 40% of enrolled students completed a FAFSA
- 2024/2025- 34% of enrolled students completed a FAFSA, and 35% of enrolled students completed a Financial Aid application of any kind.

By reducing turnaround times, and increasing staff training, we have increased our administrative capability to administer Title IV aid. In this way, we have reduced equity gaps. Moving forward, we would like to grow this progress by focusing on support/service of various areas where the data is showing a need.

### **Related Documents - Student Access, Learning, and Achievement**

[cuyamaca-2024-2025-financial-aid-applications-awards-report-20251022.pdf](#);

[cuyamaca-financial-aid-fafsa-ccpg-pell-2019su-2024sp.pdf](#)

## Annual Update

### Service Area Assessment

**Did your program complete and submit SLO/SAO assessment in the last year?**

No

**Which SLO/SAOs did you assess in the last year?**

We did not assess last year because I was newly hired as the Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

Additionally, the Financial Aid Office was in the thick of implementing our new system, Colleague Financial Aid.

Finally, we were short staffed in 2024. We had a Financial Aid Advisor and Financial Aid Assistant resign from their roles, had an existing full-time Financial Aid Advisor vacancy, a part-time Financial Aid Advisor supporting Grossmont beginning in June 2024 before retiring in December 2024, and a Scholarship Specialist vacancy.

**If you responded no above, please describe the department's plan to update SLOs/SAOs.**

The Financial Aid Office will update the SLOs/SAOs at the same time as this Annual Program Review. Moving forward, the Financial Aid Office plans to assess progress by looking at data from IESE Office, providing surveys to students who participate in outreach, assistance labs, and continuing to track Financial Aid staff activity.

**If you did not assess in the last year, please share why, including whether your program is experiencing barriers to assessment or data submission, and/or if your program would benefit from outcomes and assessment support.**

Our office plans on submitting a request for two new positions including an additional Financial Aid Assistant to support direct student support goals, and a Financial Aid Programs Specialist to support the expansion of in-reach and outreach efforts.

**Please share any outcomes assessment projects your service area has completed in the last year and how the service area used the results for improvement.**

The Financial Aid Office is evaluating the data from IESE to inform our practices/changes needed to better support our students and achieve SAOs.

## Program Goals

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### Program Goals Status

I have updated the progress on my previous goals.

### Program Goals Mapping

Mapping for all active Program Goals complete.

## Submission

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**Program Review response is complete and ready for review.**

Yes - Response is complete and ready for review

### Dean Approval and Feedback

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**I have reviewed the program review with the author and provided feedback.**

Yes - Review and feedback complete

**Feedback**

VPSS met via zoom and discussed, reviewed and provided feedback. As the VPSS I am incredibly proud of the work the team in financial aid has been able to accomplish in such a short period of time. The data on awards, awarding time and additional efficiency improvements do not go unnoticed and is having such a position impact on our students. It is my hope and appears evident that the team sees their progress and feel fulfilled, proud and clear direction on how they have progressed. So proud. No additional feedback.