



Scholarships

#6 Plan cycle - 6
Plan cycle 2020/2021
7/1/20 - 6/30/21

Introduction

The mission of the Office of Scholarships is to administer institutional, state, federal, and private scholarship programs to MSU students. The office staff provides information/services to students, prospective students, parents and the community regarding scholarship sources/application procedures.

The Office of Scholarships provides students assistance with: applying institutional/state/private scholarship awards to tuition/fee charges; identifying/awarding funds for which the student may be eligible; and providing information regarding college aid applications, costs, continued academic eligibility, TOPS, and non-resident fee waivers.

Services for distance education students are the same as described above. Services can be provided through email, electronic means, or by phone.

Performance Objective 1 Support enrollment of a highly qualified and diverse student population through the utilization of scholarship funding as incentive and reward.

1 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: For first-time freshmen, achieve a scholarships offered to enrolled conversion rate [percentage of students offered scholarships that actually enroll] of 75%.

1.1 Data

Fall	Offered	Enrolled	Conversion Rate	Average ACT	Average GPA
2017	1144	734	64.2%	24.4	3.69
2018	798	503	63.0%	25.7	3.75
2019	815	495	60.7%	25.3	3.78
2020	1025	624	60.9%	25.0	3.75
2021					

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2017-2018:

- The first enrollment class utilizing the new scholarship award strategy/grid was completed in fall 2017.
- The offered to enrolled conversion rate was 64.2%, below the desired benchmark of 75%.
- In the absence of final enrollment data, anecdotal data was used to update the academic scholarship awards/values for 2018-2019.

Plan for Improvement:

- Another year of data will be collected/analyzed before reviewing/revising the benchmark.
- Collaborate with Recruitment/Admissions to provide at least one additional text/email contact with students regarding scholarship offers.
- Collaborate with RNL to devise/implement appropriate award strategies.

2018-2019:

- The Offered to Enrolled Conversion Rate was 63.0%, below the desired benchmark of 75%.
- The average ACT and GPA of enrolled recipients increased indicating a better prepared class of recipients.
- The revised conversion benchmark will be 65%.
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Plan for Improvement:

- Continue collaboration with RNL to devise/implement appropriate award values and strategies.
- Collaborate with Admissions/Recruiting and Financial Aid to develop a financial aid/scholarships /finances brochure.
- Collaborate with Financial Aid to update the combined financial aid/scholarships award letter.

2019-2020:

- The Offered to Enrolled Conversion Rate was 60.7%, below the revised desired benchmark of 65%.
- The average ACT of enrolled recipients remained stable with the average GPA increased slightly
- Combined financial aid/scholarships award letter was completed.

Plan for improvement:

- Increase the number of scholarship awards offered by expanding the ACT categories in an attempt to increase enrollment (based on RNL discussions)
- Continue collaboration with RNL to devise/implement appropriate award values and strategies.

2020-2021:

- The Offered to Enrolled Conversion Rate was 60.9%, although increases from prior year, was below the desired benchmark of 65%.
- The average ACT and GPA of enrolled recipients declined slightly.
- COVID19 and Hurricane Laura greatly impacted the effectiveness of scholarship offers.

Plan for Improvement:

- Implement award strategies (lower award amounts and delete lower ACT category) recommended by RNL.
- Implement award strategies to increase revenue that may cause minimal negative impact to enrollment.
- Implement RNL TruCost Calculator

2 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: For transfer, international, and graduate students, achieve a scholarships offered to enrolled conversion rate of:

- $\geq 80\%$ for transfer students.
- $\geq 30\%$ for international students.
- $\geq 80\%$ for graduate students.

2.1 Data

Transfer:

Fall	Offered	Enrolled	Conversion Rate
2014	60	52	86.7%
2017	37	25	68.0%
2018	46	37	80.4%
2019	70	55	78.6%
2020	53	42	79.2%
2021			

International:

Fall	Offered	Enrolled	Conversion Rate
2014	45	16	35.6%
2017	68	15	22.0%
2018	44	6	13.6%
2019	94	36	38.3%
2020	100	31	31%
2021			

Graduate:

Fall	Offered	Enrolled	Conversion Rate

2014	78	64	82.1%
2017	54	37	69.0%
2018	34	23	67.6%
2019	57	45	78.9%
2020	51	41	80.4%
2021			

2.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2017-2018:

- Modifications to award policies/strategies made since 2014 provide inconsistent comparisons. The established benchmarks were not met.
- The transfer evaluation and Banner documentation processes have severely impacted the early scholarships award process of these award types.

Plan for Improvement:

- Collaborate with Admissions and Registrar to develop a solution to the evaluation and documentation processes that will allow the earlier processing of transfer, graduate, international scholarships.
- Update this assessment and benchmark to more accurately reflect the scholarship strategies now in place.
- Collaborate with RNL to devise/implement appropriate award strategies.

2018-2019:

- The conversion rate for transfer students was 80.4%, meeting the established 80% benchmark. This benchmark will be maintained.
- The updated benchmark for International conversion rate will be $\geq 25\%$.
- The updated benchmark for Graduate conversion rate will be $\geq 70\%$.

Plan for Improvement:

- Collaborate with Office of International Programs to evaluate credentials and make scholarship offers earlier in the admissions process.
- Continue to collaborate with RNL to devise/implement appropriate award values/strategies.
- Collaborate with various graduate program coordinators to evaluate scholarship needs.

2019-2020:

- The conversion rate for transfer students was 78.6%, slightly below the established 80% benchmark. This benchmark will be maintained.
- The International conversion rate was 38.6% exceeding the updated conversion rate of 25%.
- The Graduate conversion rate was 78.9% exceeding the updated conversion of $\geq 70\%$.

Plan for Improvement:

- Continue to concentrate and increase award efforts for transfer students.
- Collaborate with International Student Office to identify high quality students with a likelihood of enrollment and concentrate award efforts there.

2020-2021:

COVID 19 and 4 natural disasters impacted enrollment/retention.

- The conversion rate for transfer students was 79.2%, a slight increase from the prior year and only slightly below the established 80% benchmark. This benchmark will be maintained.

- The International conversion rate was 31% exceeding the updated conversion rate of 25%. Relaxed federal immigration regulations due to COVID19 allowed international students to enroll in online classes.
- The Graduate conversion rate was 80.4% exceeding the updated conversion of $\geq 70\%$. Increased online availability and increased federal funding due to COVID19 may have helped our graduate enrollment.

Plan for Improvement:

- Collaborate with Transfer Process Improvement team to streamline the transfer evaluation process.
- Collaborate with the Billing Process Improvement to evaluate the out of state fee/waiver policies.

Performance Objective 2 Ensure timely and accurate monitoring and reporting to maintain compliance with all regulators.

1 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: $\geq 95\%$ audit compliance (no material audit findings) on legislative, TOPS, Foundation, and internal audits.

1.1 Data

2016-2017:

- Annual MSU Foundation and state legislative audits revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.
- No internal audits of scholarships operations were conducted during 2016-2017.
- The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) conducted an audit of TOPS and other state financial aid programs. No findings were identified representing 100% compliance.

2017-2018:

- The annual MSU Foundation audit revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.
- No internal audit of scholarship operations were conducted during 2017-2018.
- The state legislative audit has not concluded at the time of this report. Results will be reported during the next year's report.

2018-2019:

- The annual MSU Foundation audit revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.
- Internal audit conducted an informational evaluation of monies used for study abroad. No deficiencies /non-compliance were discovered, but information was used to update policies/use of funds.
- The state legislative audit at another institution revealed problems with the National Guard/TOPS payments. Repayments for 3 McNeese students were made to LOSFA.
- Although no material findings were issued, the NCAA audit revealed inconsistencies in the calculation of some scholarship percentages.

2019-2020:

- The annual MSU Foundation audit revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.
- The annual NCAA audit revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance. Suggestions were made to streamline the GIA award language.

2020-2021:

- The annual MSU Foundation audit revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.
- The state (Legislative Audit) revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.
- The annual NCAA audit revealed no deficiencies in the scholarship programs - representing 100% compliance.

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2016-2017:

- No deficiencies were revealed in the Foundation, Legislative, or LOSFA audits.
- Although no findings were identified in the LOSFA audit, an internal review of sample items identified a potential problem in the TOPS grade reporting program which was corrected prior to the completion of the audit.
- The weekly overaward reports have significantly aided staff in timely identification of possible problems for NCAA and TOPS students. The Scholarships Office staff continues to collaborate with Athletic personnel to update Athletics Procedures Manual.

Decisions based on results:

- Staff continue to better utilize functions of Banner in updating processes while written documentation of processes/procedures is inadequate.
- NCAA policies continue to require review/modifications to athletic policies/procedures.

Actions to be continued:

- Staff training/development/delegation to better utilize Banner resources.

Actions to be revised:

- Athletic/scholarship policies/procedures
- Update of scholarship policies/procedures
- College/department listing of Foundation scholarships

2017-2018:

The benchmark was exceeded. Although the legislative audit is not complete, it was revealed that the written policies and procedures regarding the scholarship committees and award guidelines should be updated.

Plan for Improvement:

- Update the Scholarship Committees/Award Procedures provided to the Legislative Auditor
- Update the Banner Scholarship Data Entry Procedures
- Implement a schedule of policy/procedure review of two policies annually. The policies/procedures to be updated in the coming year are: Foundation Departmental Selection Procedures and Non Resident Waiver Processing.

2018-2019:

The benchmark was exceeded with no material findings in institutional audits.

Plan for Improvement:

- Modify the language used in athletic Grant-in-Aid offers to more accurately reflect the values of the athletic awards.
- Policies/procedures to be updated in the coming year: Athletic Data Entry Procedures (Banner /NCAA Compliance Assistant) and TOPS Billing Procedures.

2019-2020:

100% compliance on all audits was achieved.

Plan for Improvement:

- Closely monitor the Compliance Assistant software and compare with actual Banner information

2020-2021:

100% compliance on all audits was achieved.

Plan for Improvement:

- Continue to review/update policies that were modified/implemented due to Covid19 and hurricane disasters.

2 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: $\geq 95\%$ of institutional/state reports completed by required and self-imposed due dates.

2.1 Data

Project Management Timeline:

Project or Report	Target Date	Completion Date		
		2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
TOPS Billing (Fall)	10/1	10/1/15	9/28/16	9/27/17
TOPS Billing (Spring)	3/1	2/17/16	2/16/17	3/1/18
TOPS Grades (Fall)	1/8	12/17/15	12/16/16	12/14/17
TOPS Grades (Spring)	6/10	5/23/16	6/10/17**	5/23/18
TOPS Grades (Sum)	8/10	8/3/15	8/2/16	8/8/17
BOR-5	7/31	7/24/15	7/27/16	7/31/17
Rockefeller Status Report (established by agency)	9/23*	9/14/15	9/19/16	N/A
Rockefeller Grades (established by agency)	9/23*	7/8/15	9/19/16	N/A
Initial Scholarship Awards	12/20	12/11/15	10/17/2016	10/3/17
Remaining FTF Awards	4/1	3/31/16	N/A	N/A
Recipient Thank-Yous	12/01	11/15/15	11/15/16	11/15/17
HC Drew Report	7/15	7/15/15	7/15/16	8/15/17
Foundation Donor Notification	12/16	12/1/15	12/1/16	12/8/17

*In 2015, Rockefeller Status Report target date was 9/18/15, and Rockefeller Grades target date was 7/15/15.

**Originally submitted—problem with PGP password.

Project or Report	Target Date	Completion Date		
		2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021*
TOPS Billing (Fall)	10/1	9/20/18	9/26/2019	10/7/2020
TOPS Billing (Spring)	3/1	2/25/19	2/18/2020	3/10/2021
TOPS Grades (Fall)	1/8	12/17/18	12/19/2019	12/21/2020
TOPS Grades (Spring)	6/10	5/30/19	7/7/2020*	6/8/2021

TOPS Grades (Sum)	8/10	8/1/18	8/5/2019	8/4/2020
BOR-5	7/31	7/31/18	7/30/2019	7/31/2020
Rockefeller Status Report (established by agency)	10/15	10/11/18	9/18/2019	10/23/20
Rockefeller Grades (established by agency)	7/15	N/A	7/11/2019	7/15/2021
Initial Scholarship Awards	10/15	9/24/18	10/7/2019	11/4/2020
Recipient Thank-Yous	12/01	11/24/18	12/2/2019	Ongoing
HC Drew Report	7/15	7/15/18	7/15/19	
Foundation Donor Notification	12/16	12/14/18	12/16/2019	Ongoing

2.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2016-2017:

- The Project Management Timeline has been updated.
- The annual Scholarship Donor/Recipient Brunch was held with approximately 375 in attendance. The event was very successful.
- The director continues an increased role with Foundation fund raising efforts including review of scholarship guidelines, attendance at donor events, etc.
- While training and procedures modifications in conjunction with Student Central have begun, the delay in the opening of Chozen SC necessitates the continuation of policy/procedures updates.

Decisions based on results:

- The opening of Student Central will significantly change office operations. A complete review of office operations, forms, and procedures will be conducted.

Actions to be continued:

- Staff training/delegation to better utilize Banner options for document maintenance.
- Increased participation in fund raising efforts.

Actions to be revised:

- Scholarship Office Procedures/Training due to Student Central opening.

2017-2018:

- 92% of the reporting target dates were met, below the 95% benchmark.
- Modifications to FTF scholarship award procedures allow an earlier deadline for Initial Scholarship Awards and a continuous award cycle.
- The office move in July 2017 and the opening/training needed for Student Central delayed the completion of the Drew Report.
- Initial training of Student Central Staff was completed and a basic training module developed.

Plan for Improvement:

- Update the Project Timeline: Add Initial Scholarship Awards - October 15; remove "Remaining Freshman Awards."

T/F Account Credits	4.00	4.00	4.20	4.47	4.11				
Friendly Staff	4.35	4.50	4.25	4.29	4.27				
Staff Availability	4.29	4.35	4.26	4.29	4.22				
Information	4.17	4.15	4.10	4.19	4.16				
Average	3.97	4.00	4.02	4.24	4.11				

1.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2016-2017:

- In spring 2017, a service survey was mailed to 200 randomly selected scholarship applicants enrolled in the fall 2016 semester. Postage paid reply envelopes were included with the surveys. A total of 21 students responded to the survey. Office Publicity continues to remain the lowest survey score.

Decisions based on results:

- With the opening of Student Central, the service survey focus will change and will be modified accordingly.
- Rather than implementing the Scholarships Office "FTF Did Not Enroll" survey, information was obtained from the recruitment data (Withdrawn Applicant Data).
- Periodically, staff a table in the New Ranch (or other area) to provide scholarships information /assistance.
- The scholarship brochure/award philosophy has been revised.

Actions to be expanded/revised:

- Electronic Version of Service Survey.

Actions/items to be developed:

- Establish achievement levels/benchmarks.

2017-2018:

- Service surveys were mailed to 200 randomly selected fall 2017 applicants; 20 surveys were returned. An overall average of 4.02 was achieved, meeting the benchmark of 4.00. Results remained stable from the previous year.
- An automated survey was developed after the fall semester survey was completed. Results from the fall survey were compiled in the automated survey.
- With the opening of Student Central, the public now has limited access to the Scholarships Office staff. This may account for the lowered scores in the "staff" areas of the survey.
- The new Scholarships Brochure attributed to the increase in the "Application Process" score.

Plan for Improvement:

- Collaborate with the AVP for Enrollment Management to determine the future service survey format (due to the opening of and combined assessment of services) in conjunction with Student Central.
- Implement the new procedure for documentation of student interaction on RHACOMM.

2018-2019:

- Plans to develop a combined assessment of all offices/services in Student Central was not completed. Therefore the Scholarships Office assessment was done in spring 2019 instead of the usual fall semester. Surveys were sent to 200 randomly selected students enrolled in fall/spring 2018-19. A total of 17 surveys were returned.

- Documenting student interaction on RHACOMM has been very beneficial and helpful in customer service initiatives.

Plan for Improvement:

- Revise assessment tool to better reflect the services (will work with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness).
- Continue to provide on-going training to Student Central staff.

2019-2020:

Satisfaction of services continues to remain steady based on survey results. Anecdotal comments continue to indicate that students think their interactions with Student Central are with Scholarships Office staff.

Plan for Improvement:

- Devise an email survey that can be sent to students with whom Scholarships Office staff has specific phone/email/personal interaction.

2020-2021:

- Due to Covid19 and 4 natural disasters, the assessment survey was not completed this year.
- Survey data from the Billing Process Improvement team was utilized to review the effectiveness and ease of the billing/award process

Plan for Improvement:

- Revise assessment tool to better reflect the services
- Work with the Billing Process Improvement Team to streamline the billing/scholarship application process.
- Continue to provide on-going training to Student Central staff.

2 Assessment and Benchmark

Benchmark: Meet with a minimum of two different focus groups during the upcoming year.

2.1 Data

2016-2017:

A focus group of University personnel was convened and information obtained is outlined below:

- Eliminate the lower levels of ACT/GPA scholarship offers for FTF.
- Misunderstanding of how scholarship awards are listed on RPAAWRD.

A focus group of students was convened and information obtained is outlined below:

- More information is needed on the distinction between the financial aid office and scholarship office programs.
- There should be more information about how continuing students can apply for scholarships.
- More information should be provided to students regarding the continuation requirements for TOPS and other awards.

2017-2018:

A group of University personnel (recruiters/admissions, financial aid personnel, student central staff, scholarship staff, registrar staff) provided the following information:

- There is confusion (among staff and students) regarding the Award Status field on RPAAWRD - ESTI, PEND- and why students are not allowed to accept some awards online.
- Prospective students (parents) do not understand that the GPA used for scholarships eligibility is not the same GPA as appears on the high school transcript.

A focus group of students provided the following information:

- The scholarship brochure is easy to understand for prospective, first-time students.
- The scholarship brochure led students to believe that they could continue to take the ACT after enrollment to receive scholarships based on the award grid.
- Information on academic scholarships for continuing students is lacking.

2018-2019:

Meetings with various University personnel provided the following information:

- The combined financial aid/scholarship award letter should continue to be reviewed for improvements.
- Parents/students continue to question the use of the unweighted high school GPA in scholarship selection.
- Students do not understand that the "course repeat" policy does not impact the TOPS GPA.

Meetings/information from students/prospective students/parents provided the following information:

- The term "non-resident" is often times confused as to mean "not living on campus" instead of "out of state."
- Utilizing a four year total value in the scholarship offers has confused some families as to the amount available for each year.

2019-2020:

Meetings with various University personnel provided the following information:

- The combined financial aid/scholarship award letter has caused confusion when the student actually owes more than what was indicated on the award letter.
- Some parents are surprised by the 2.75% credit card fee.

Meetings/information from students/prospective students/parents provided the following information:

- The combined financial aid/scholarship award letter has caused confusion when the student actually owes more than what was indicated on the award letter.
- Can we add Cowboy Cash to our account without having to come in person to fill out a form?

2020-2021:

Meetings/Surveys with university personnel provided the following information:

- Why aren't housing charges on the bill:
- they receive numerous questions from students and parents who don't understand the bill

Billing Survey of other universities provided the following information:

- All institutions surveyed included housing charges on the general fee bill/student account
- Most institutions allow installment plan options
- Most institutions provided periodic bill/statement notifications.

Student surveys/interviews provided the following information:

- What is the "refund" under the charge column?
- most students only "view their bill" when prompted by an email or "Hold" email
- Why don't housing scholarships show on the bill?
- Students don't read all of the "words" at the top of the bill

2.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2016-2017:

- During 2017, the focus of scholarship modifications were on the FTF award process. Due to this focus, the items identified in the student focus group remained nearly identical to the previous year.

Items identified in the 2016 Master Plan which were fulfilled in 2017 include:

- A scholarship training session was held for recruiters.
- A scholarship brochure was developed.
- Additional incentives/opportunities were provided for top academic recruits.

Items suggested in the 2016 Master Plan which will be fulfilled in 2018 with the implementation of new CRM:

- Additional emphasis on "scholarship" in the online admission/scholarship application.
- Online admission/scholarship application will provide 'click' to upload a document.

Decisions based on results:

- Include at least one recruiter or student central specialist on scholarship committees.
- Provide scholarship staff/information in the New Ranch and other high traffic areas of campus.

Actions to be expanded/revised:

- Convene/expand the focus groups.

Actions/items to be developed:

- Scholarship table/information in campus locations.

2017-2018:

- Implementation of the scholarship brochure appears to have reduced some of the confusion between scholarship/financial aid programs as this was not an issue in the focus groups this year.
- The FTF academic scholarship award grid was updated to eliminate scholarship awards for 20-22 ACT and 3.00-3.24 GPAs for the 2018-2019 award cycle. The placement of scholarship information on the website was modified.
- With the implementation of Radius, the capability of "one-click" uploading of scholarship documents is now available beginning with the spring 2019 semester. The online Application for Admissions now prominently includes "Scholarships" as a part of the application.
- Information regarding continuing student scholarships availability continues to be a concern.

Plan for Improvement:

- Update the scholarship brochure to include information regarding evaluation of the high school GPA and ACT deadline for FTF.
- Create a one page "Application FAQs for Continuing Students" that can be available online and can be emailed to inquiring students.
- If resources are available during the RNL consultation, create an academic on-line scholarship application.
- Expand the Scholarships/Student Central training module.

2018-2019:

The scholarship brochure was updated and provided a significant amount of information/data. Additional training was provided to Student Central staff to enhance services needed during specific times of the academic year/process.

Plan for Improvement:

- Send TOPS students a communication regarding the course repeat policy.

Update the scholarship brochure to provide information about collegiate financial responsibilities and various financial aid and payment options.

- Update the scholarship brochure to be more aesthetically appealing (per RNL suggestion).

2019-2020:

Plan for Improvement:

- Additional education regarding Electronic Check payment option
- Additional staff training to explain the billing process

2020-2021:

Plan for Improvement:

- Continue work with the Billing/Scholarships Process Improvement Team