

Financial Aid Advisory Committee Meeting 1 Agenda 11/24/25

Participants:Jamilyn Penn, Eric Baer, Beth Carter, Rolita Ezeonu, Loyal Allen, Millicent Oilee, Jenni Sandler, Maribel Jimenez, Corinne Soltis, Tanisha Williams, Juli Hammond, Mariela Barriga

Introductions & Opening Remarks

- Committee sponsors (Dr Penn, Dr Ezeonu, Dr Jimenez) 10 minutes
- Cultural introductions (90s each)

Community Agreements (8 minutes)

How we interact and communicate with each other:

- Respect and professionalism
- Assuming good intentions
- Impact over intent
- Silence (and provide processing time)
- Step up or step back
- Take care of yourself first
- Speak open
- Be ok with discomfort
- Commit to repair

Challenge the ideas and not the people

Committee Goals & Outcomes

From the charter:

- Financial Aid Advisory Committee Foundations and Expectations
 - a. Establish the purposes of the committee, how meetings will function, the continuing education requirements of those who commit to being on the committee, the expectation that committee members will solicit information from constituents to bring to meetings.
 - b. Establish Rapport Among Committee Members
 - i. To help build trust, committee members will engage in team building exercises at the start of every meeting to promote open, honest, and respectful communication.
- Committee Member Financial Aid Training and Compliance
 - a. Leaders from the Financial Aid Office will lead the committee through necessary regulatory and policy training to understand the primary topic of review to ensure that all committee members understand the regulatory and policy boundaries before review begins.

2025-26 Priorities: The committee will be charged to review, learn and provide recommendations to Dr. Penn and Executive Cabinet regarding the following Financial Aid policies, procedures and operations by **January 31, 2026.**

1. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy

- a. Review the Financial Aid Office SAP policy, procedures, forms, and communications for clarity, equity, and sustainability. Suggest ways that could improve student probation outcomes and which can be codified into the SAP process.
 - b. Academic Plans
 - i. The Financial Aid Office requires Academic Plans, however there are limitations in the infrastructure and capacity to adopt a thorough Financial Aid academic plan and monitoring process. Review needs, constraints, with the intention of proposing changes to faculty, staff, and executive cabinet.
2. Data Sharing and Collaboration Across Campus
 - a. While FERPA is required by all departments at Highline, Financial Aid is also governed by additional regulations that make data sharing and collaboration across campus more difficult. Review the issues and regulations, and make recommendations to improve data sharing and collaboration efforts with the Financial Aid Office.
 - b. *Erich Baer brings up sharing follow-ups campus wide*

Short Term & Long Term Goals (15 minutes)

- Short term: What is already happening? Updates from Financial Aid team
 - FA Steps
 - Corinne will share slide with teams
 - How are other colleges doing it?
 - Outreach and Research
 - Erich Baer has offered to help
 -
 - Announcements going out to campus
 - Where we've been
 - Where we're going
 - Addressing concerns
 - Financial Aid Response Times
 - Turnaround time will change to 3-days rather than 5
 - Walk-In times are long
 - Caused by high turnover
 - Low salaries brought employees with less FA experience
 - Training time for new employees
 - Commitment to keep wait times under 3 hours during peak times, and 1 hours during non peak hours
 - Additional FA available appointments
 - Information Release Forms
 - FERPA
 - Financial Aid Regulations

- When notice is sent across campus,
- Poor customer service
 - Challenge: Serving more students with less resources
 - Response:
 - internal training with team
 - Culturally competent training
 - High volume training
 - FA have requested additional employees
 - Executive Cabinet is aware of needs
 - Feedback from committee:
 - Historical harm to student community
 - Address employee turnaround
 - *Important outcome of this committee to help the leadership of FA build in more resilience so that the loss of some key employees*
 - *Historically faculty were able to communicate to FA with a student.*
- Financial Aid Trust
 - Weekly/Monthly communication
- Add to improvement:
 - Centralized location of FA information so that someone like faculty can help a student when FA reps are unavailable.

1. Response Time Improvement:

- a. *Prior Policy and/or Operations:* During the month of September 2025, students who contacted our office often didn't receive a response until 20 days after they contacted our office.
- b. *Our commitment effective immediately:* We are committed to a maximum of 3-business day turnaround time when students email our Financial Aid email at financialaid@highline.edu
- c. *Status as of today:* As of today, the average email turnaround time is 1-business day

2. Reducing Financial Aid Office Walkin Wait Times

- a. *Prior Policy and/or Operations:* Peak wait times for Walkin appointments were around 2-5 hours during the 5 weeks prior to the start of Fall quarter
- b. *Our commitment effective immediately:* We will have a maximum wait time of 3 hours during peaks times, and less than 1hr wait times during normal operations
- c. *Status as of today:* Since the second week of the quarter, the average wait time is 30 minutes for students walkins. Additional student appointment options and staffing resources will allow us to meet our peak response time goals.

3. Significantly Increasing Scheduled Appointment Time Availability

- a. *Prior Policy and/or Operations:* During parts of August, September, and October, the office had only 20 hours of available Advisor appointment times per week.
- b. *Our commitment effective immediately:* We are committed to increase the availability of student appointment slots for students.

- c. *Status as of today:* As of the third week of October, the Office increased the number of available student appointments from 20 to 72 hours per week allowing us to see 144 students a week, which will be sustained moving forward.
- 4. Financial Aid Information Sharing with Staff and Faculty
 - a. *Prior Policy and Operations:* Previously, staff and faculty did not have access to receive information from the Financial Aid office about a student unless they had an information release form completed.
 - b. *Our commitment effective immediately:* After a thorough review by our Assistant Attorney General Financial Aid will provide staff and faculty with information about students' financial aid without the need for additional information release forms.
 - c. *Status as of today:* This change is effective immediately.
- 5. Customer Services
 - a. *Prior Policy and Operations:* The Financial Aid team acknowledges that we must improve our customer service with students, staff, and faculty.
 - b. *Our commitment effective immediately:* Students deserve culturally responsive, customer focused service, and the Financial Aid Office is committed to training and implementation of significant changes to our customer service delivery.
 - c. *Status as of today:* We have just concluded 6 weeks of customer service training, and will now partner with outside specialists with a focus on culturally responsive, high traffic customer service training.
- Long term: Based on our charter, what are the long term outcomes of this committee?
 - Establish goals, benchmarks, and metrics for the Financial Aid office and report out to the campus on regular basis on how the office is meeting those goals and benchmarks using these metrics.
 - Help the leadership of FA build in more resilience so that the loss of some key employees or the taking of leave will not lead to such catastrophic issues.

Financial Aid Process at Highline for 2026-2027

A process outline from the Financial Aid team (20 minutes)

Next Steps (10 minutes)

- Research:
 - Peer institutions
 - Informational interviews with Financial Aid team
 - [Complete Financial Aid Ecosystem Mapping Worksheet](#)
 - Outlining monthly benchmarks
 - Communicating with campus community
 - Calendar
 - Newsletter
 - Teams Communication

Next meeting scheduled for December 15, 2-3:30pm

- Beth Carter and Loyal will be sharing inquiries with the group before our next meeting.