

**Fullerton College
Faculty Senate Student Equity Committee
2012 Recommendation #1**

To: Rolando Sanabria, Faculty Senate President
Cc: President Rajen Vurdien, College President
From: FC Faculty Senate Student Equity Committee
Date: November 8, 2012

Recommendation #1: Redesign of the Financial Aid Office/Service Area

Rationale:

This recommendation has been the #1 identified recommendation from last year's Student Equity Committee and continued to be placed at the top for the 2012-2013 Academic Year.

When reviewing the Fullerton College Goals. All three goals connect directly to the success of the Financial Aid Office.

1. Fullerton College will promote student success.
2. Fullerton College will reduce the achievement gap.
3. Fullerton College will strengthen the connections with the community.

Background:

There are many concerns the Committee has in relation to the Financial Aid area. A large number of our students receive some type of financial aid during their time at Fullerton College. This illustrates the importance of the messages the College gives to students when entering the campus, especially when locating and using the Financial Aid Office including the follow through on guiding and supporting each student needs.

As you enter the Financial Aid area from the north side. You feel like you are entering another time period. It is reminiscent of a 1930's Welfare Office that you see in books and documentaries. To begin with, the Sign in the Glass overhead at the entry states "Financial Aid"; however, the plaque to the right side of the door which is outdated states a multiple use space: Financial Aid Office, Veteran's Services, Classrooms 117-119. Second Floor: Social Sciences Classrooms 121-127.

This is a historic building which has some beautiful architectural features that need to be honored and preserved. There is a stark contrast to the east entrance of the 100 building (housing administrative offices) and the west entrance of the building (housing the Financial Aid Office and two classrooms).

Entering through the west entrance, the hallway is in physical disarray
-from the cushioned "bulletin board/wall coverings which are disintegrating and tearing
-to the acoustic ceilings and old tube lighting,

- to an old brochure rack with peeling paint and a tack board above that is full of torn announcements and staples,
- to old linoleum flooring covering the original tile floors,
- to an atrium area in the middle devoid of any of the original architectural features,
- to a staircase going to the basement with original tiles which are filthy and have not been maintained,
- to a counter at the end of the hallway that has a sign above saying "Welcome to Financial Aid".
 - One counter that has no privacy for students requesting support.
 - One counter that is directly across of a bathroom in need of serious replacement of all the plumbing,
 - One counter that is right next to a large glass south entrance.

What is the message students and families get when they arrive in this hallway?

Is it one where we value all students? Where Fullerton College is a place where everyone is welcomed and treated with respect? Are we, as an institution, truly supporting student success?

The physical changes in the hallway should be an easy remedy. The next step is to look at the space given for the thousands of students that need to be able to access the financial aid services on campus. The Financial Aid staff are working in an extremely packed space which does not allow for any type of confidentiality. Confidentiality is a must for any Financial Aid office let alone space to breathe.

Bottom line they need more space. The following are recommendations to support staff in their ability to support students on their journey to become successful learners and college graduates.

Recommendations: The Faculty Senate support and move forward the following recommendations:

1. Create a Financial Aid Service Area on the entire West side of the 100 building. That includes the space they are presently using (the cramped "catacombs" - not an underground cemetery but the term provides a visual) behind the counter, as well as Rooms 117 and 119.
2. Remove the desks, partitions, etc. in the present space that takes up the center of the room (this is the space behind the counter).
3. Make all the three offices, single office space. One is divided now into two areas.
4. Close the south entrance from the Hall (use it only as an emergency exit) and make the north entrance the entry into the Financial Aid Service Area (The Financial Aid staff can come up with another name). This will aid in securing the space.

- The monitor that is now set up above the counter to let people know their "place in line" could be moved to 117 where there can be a portion of the room designed as a waiting area and gathering place or the students can use the newly established technology (beginning of Fall 2012) to be notified of the time their appointment.
5. Closing off 117 and 119 as classroom space will also make it secure. Presently the south and north doors are open and accessible during evening class hours. The electronic monitor has been stolen in the past.
 - The present classes using these two classrooms are from the Social Science Division.
 - They are large classes which will need to find another location.
 - The dilemma is that none of the new construction has large classroom spaces. It is suggested that the campus looks at the Tech. Village and/or Berkeley Center for modifying those spaces to accommodate large classes or convert some of the other existing portable buildings into multi-sized spaces. Also to maximize the use of classroom spaces possibly look at Friday, Saturday, Sunday class offerings.
 6. Remodel Rooms 117 and 119 for a gathering area to wait for face-to-face advisement. Room 117 could also be the waiting area for the electronic monitor to identify next available technician.
 7. Have the desks, etc. from the middle of the present location be relocated to Rooms 117 and 119. This will provide more privacy in advisement.
 8. Have the Financial Aid workshops be scheduled for the 117/110 remodeled space. This space should be remodeled based on the Financial Aid staff's reevaluation of their needs and how to best support students.
 9. Hire additional staff to meet the demands of the increased numbers of students applying for financial aid. Have all the Financial Aid staff trained to address the diverse needs of our student population. Also provide trained peer counselors that work under the supervision of a staff person (possibly use work study).
 10. Remodel the hallway to return the architectural features and to match the hallway on the other entry to the first floor of the 100 building.
 11. Remove the acoustic walls and ceiling panels. Paint, showcasing the architecture. Return the flooring to the original tile floors.
 12. Replace the plumbing and deep clean and service the bathrooms.

The Student Equity Committee sees **confidentiality** as the most glaring issue when looking at current use of space for the Financial Aid Office. There are many additional questions:

- Are we meeting ADA compliance?
- Are we providing a place for students to share personal information privately?

- Is the space a healthy place to work and get services with the constant smell of the bathrooms located across the hall?
- We are a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) which receives grants that support both the college and the district to meet the needs of students from the under represented groups on campus. Financial aid is critical for many of these students to have access to higher education. Are we supporting these students?

Bottom Line: We need to do a better job of welcoming students into the Fullerton College community and to provide quality services once they are here. For the majority of students, the Financial Aid Office is **THE FACE OF THE COLLEGE**.

The Fullerton College Centennial is a great time to show that we are truly honoring our Mission and College Goals.

The FC Student Equity Committee would like the Faculty Senate and the Administration to work with Greg Ryan and the Financial Aid Office Staff to follow-up on these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted by the Faculty Senate Student Equity Committee:

Chris Lamm, Faculty Senate Student Equity Committee Chair; Faculty/Social Science Division: Child Development & Educational Studies Dept.
 Adela López, Faculty/Social Science Division: Ethnic Studies Department
 Carolyn Facer, Faculty/Mathematics & Computer Sciences Division: Math Dept.
 Jose Miranda, Faculty/Technology & Engineering Division: Automotive Dept. (2011-2012)
 Annie Liu, Asian/Pacific Islander Faculty/Staff Association (Humanities Division)
 Nahrin Hinaro, Counseling
 Pilar Ellis, Manager of the International Student Center
 Mark Greenhalgh, Dean of Mathematics & Computer Science Division
 Chuck Helms, Classified Representative/Skills Center
 Ricardo Muniz, Student Representative from ICC
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