



New Classified Hiring/Position Justification

Hiring Division/Department: Enrollment Services/Financial Aid **Position Title:** Financial Aid Assistant

Classification

Position type: Permanent x Full Time 100 # of months 12
Part Time _____ % of Full Time _____ # of months _____

Position: General Funds _____
Allocation: External Funds* _____ Expiration Date _____

Budget Information

Grade 22A Step 1 Annual Salary \$ 56,064 + ben.

Justification

Please respond to the following questions in electronic format to the appropriate Dean, Manager or Vice President. Additional information may be provided as relevant for position justification.

1. Describe the specific needs for the position requested and the duties of this position in a brief statement.
2. Explain how this position aligns with and supports the mission and strategic goals of the college.
3. Explain how adding this position will strengthen the department or division.
4. Explain how this work will be accomplished if the position is not filled.

Please submit completed Classified Position Hiring/ Position Justification electronically to the responsible administrator in your division or department.

This position has been reviewed by the department or division and is recommended for hiring.

Dean / Director / Hiring Supervisor

Date

1. Describe the specific needs for the position requested and the duties of this position in a brief statement.

The Financial Aid Department is seeking funding to hire a permanent fulltime Financial Aid Assistant. This important position provides consistent professional staffing at our front counter, supports the administrative and clerical needs of the office, and maintains and supplements our capacity to engage in the numerous initiatives across the campus and in our community where financial aid expertise is needed. Special programs such as Promise have substantially increased and highlighted the need for knowledgeable financial aid staffing at the first point of contact.

This position would provide the main coverage at our front counter, answer incoming calls and manage our general voicemail, monitor our general email account, advise and assist students in completing their financial aid applications, review and provide intake for a variety of confidential documents and support the work of the Technicians.

For several years, we have relied on student assistants to maintain front counter coverage during the majority of our open hours. As helpful as they are, student employees are limited in the level and scope of work we can have them perform. In prior years, we have received funds to hire a short term hourly Financial Aid Assistant and the impact on the overall office environment and customer service has been extremely positive. Unfortunately, we have lost well-qualified staff due to the temporary nature of the funding and their ability to obtain permanent employment elsewhere.

Our ability to appropriately and effectively address the diverse needs of our students often relies upon the staff member to ask the right questions; a skill derived from extensive training and experience. This underscores the need for a permanent classified employee rather than a student assistant being the first point of contact by default. Given the current social climate affecting many of our immigrant students and their families and the economic stress and financial insecurity affecting the majority of the students, it is even more important that we provide a well-trained, socially aware, equity-minded staff member at our front counter.

2. Explain how this position aligns with and supports the mission and strategic goals of the college.

The College is committed to providing an educational space that is transformative for the communities we serve. Having access to this social imperative is becoming more and more challenging for our highest need students as the cost of living continues to rise and the socio-political climate is generating increased fear and uncertainty to those in our service area. Having a professional staff member as a first point of contact is key for building trust and removing barriers that impede student access and success. Often, financial barriers derail even the most motivated student; therefore, it is critical that students receive concise, correct and complete information at that first interaction with our department. We are unable to meet this need given our current staffing limitations. Students who are well prepared before classes begin are much more likely to succeed and re-enroll.

The addition of a fulltime Financial Aid Assistant, much like other front line staff in Student Services, will help ensure new and continuing students are guided and supported along their educational path in the most direct manner. The Financial Aid Assistant, unlike most student assistants, will be familiar with eligibility requirements for a variety of other programs and services and can provide students with a warm hand-off to Promise, EOPS, Personal Counseling, SparkPoint, the Dream Center, Puente, etc. which builds community, engagement and contributes to student success and completion.

3. Explain how adding this position will strengthen the department or division.

Exceptional customer service is needed in all front-line staff and the Financial Aid Department should not be an exception. The addition of a permanent Financial Aid Assistant strengthens our department by placing a well-trained staff member as the initial point of contact, which is key in supporting institutional enrollment management and retention efforts.

There is a great deal of fear and stigma around financial aid. The addition of a permanent staff member who is able to build trust by providing consistent and complete information in an environment that is welcoming and supportive will help our department remove these barriers that inhibit students and families from disclosing personal information that may increase their access to financial aid or other services.

A Financial Aid Assistant has the capacity to review complex student data and respond fully to inquiries from students who may have lost eligibility for the California College Promise Grant (formerly the BOGFW), need assistance enrolling in one of the disbursement options or have stale-dated or lost checks and other administrative issues a student employee cannot address. In our current structure, student assistants frequently need to ask the Technicians for guidance or the Technicians are covering the front counter. This pulls the Technicians away from completing their work, which delays awarding of aid and reduces their ability to provide individual counseling to our neediest students.

The Financial Aid Department receives multiple requests throughout the year in partnership with Outreach to present information sessions and deliver application workshops in our feeder high schools. Financial Aid plays an integral role promoting and supporting our Promise Scholars Program, the Dream Center and Dreamers Task Force, Study Abroad, COLTSCon, PEP, CBET, Proactive Registration, SparkPoint, Transfer Services, NSF/STEM Center Scholars, and more. Another permanent staff member will enable our department to be more responsive to the numerous requests we receive for participation in on and off campus initiatives.

4. Explain how this work will be accomplished if the position is not filled.

Without permanent staffing for our front counter, we struggle weekly (sometimes daily) to address office coverage needs. Technicians and the Director will continue to share responsibility for covering the front counter when student coverage is not available which is disruptive to their individual workloads and diminishes their ability to meet one on one and actually provide proactive financial aid counseling.

The current staffing model is unsustainable given the increasing demand for financial aid presence in the different initiatives both on campus and in our service areas. It is a challenge on the department to provide adequate service when we have more than one person out of the office. Having a reliable and consistent Financial Aid Assistant in the office who is assigned to some of these initiatives will balance workload and maintain quality service at our front counter. Without reliable front office coverage, we will not provide our students with the best service possible. It is difficult to quantify the impact this has on our students.