



# **Leveraging your Learning –** Supporting Financial Aid Application Completion as a Counseling Intern

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# Background

## **Scott – Internship Supervisor**

- ▶ Elk Grove High School Counselor – 17 Years

## **Anna – Internship Supervisor**

- ▶ Elk Grove High School Counselor – 10 years

## **Kalene – Counseling Intern**

- ▶ Pursuing M.A. in school counseling from Northeastern Illinois University



## **Elk Grove High School – Township District 214**

- ▶ 2,004 students (21-22 school year)
- ▶ 33% low income students, 12% English Learners
- ▶ 8 caseload counselors, 1 postsecondary counselor
- ▶ Average caseload ≈ 260 students

# The Benefits of Becoming Involved with Financial Aid Completion as an Intern

## **Student intern**

- ▶ Gains technical understanding of financial aid applications
- ▶ Direct contact opportunities with students
- ▶ Marketable experience to highlight on a resume

## **Intern Supervisor**

- ▶ Increased capacity for Tier III student contact
- ▶ Assist students in meeting specific graduation requirements

## **School**

- ▶ Increased financial aid completion rates
- ▶ Supports FAFSA Mandate
- ▶ Supports benchmarks on the Illinois PaCE Framework

# Pathways to FAFSA Enlightenment during Internship

- ▶ Site supervisor(s)
  - ▶ Depends on supervisor's comfort level with financial aid applications
- ▶ Your buildings designated college and career person
  - ▶ Opportunity to collaborate/learn from a person in building with financial aid expertise
- ▶ Free Professional Development Opportunities
  - ▶ ISAC
  - ▶ Dept of Ed
  - ▶ Professional Organizations: National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), Illinois Association for College Admissions Counselors (IACAC), National College Attainment Network (NCAN), Illinois School Counselor Association (ISCA), American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

# Free Professional Development Opportunities

- ▶ Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) – [www.isac.org/pd](http://www.isac.org/pd)
  - ▶ Financial Aid Certification Series
  - ▶ Professional Development Webinar Series
  - ▶ Professional Development by Request
  - ▶ On-Demand Webinar Recordings
  - ▶ E-messaging
- ▶ Department of Education (ED) [www.financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov](http://www.financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov)
  - ▶ Webinars/training
  - ▶ Publications
  - ▶ Dear Colleague Letters
- ▶ Professional Organizations
  - ▶ Webinars, conferences, trainings, etc. (depending on the organization)
  - ▶ Typically, reduced membership/discounted prices for students

# How to Get Involved with Financial Aid Completion As an Intern

1. **Express your interest** - *Communicate your desire to be involved with financial aid completion*
2. **Prepare** - *Develop your financial aid knowledge base*
3. **Get Involved** - *Determine existing financial aid events and opportunities you can get involved with*
4. **Create Opportunities** - *Incorporate financial aid into your conversations with students*
5. **Ask questions!** - *“how can I support student’s financial aid completion?”*

# Tier 1 FAFSA Completion Supports

## **Universal Supports**

- ▶ Incorporate relevant financial aid information into classroom guidance/presentations
- ▶ School/district wide financial aid completion workshops
- ▶ Financial aid flyers/handouts/promotional materials/posters/displays
- ▶ Parent financial aid presentations and events

# Tier II FAFSA Completion Support

## Targeted Supports

- ▶ Incorporate relevant financial aid information into small groups
  - ▶ First generation groups, undocumented/dreamer groups, postsecondary/college groups, career groups,
- ▶ Financial aid completion workshops/presentations for specific student groups
  - ▶ AVID/TRIO/GEAR Up classes, CTE classes, etc.
- ▶ Weekend/evening/off-site parent financial aid events
- ▶ Financial aid offerings in other languages
- ▶ Walk-in financial aid completion support hours



# Tier III Financial Aid Completion Support

## **Intensive Supports**

- ▶ Identify students that have not completed Financial Aid Applications and meet with them individually
- ▶ Identify students where no EFC was generated and meet with them individually
- ▶ One-on-one financial aid completion assistance

# Intern Tips

- ▶ Take ownership for your learning
- ▶ Learn about your school's financial aid completion efforts
- ▶ Make connections and work collaboratively with staff members
- ▶ Print a paper copy of the FAFSA and the Alternative App User Guide for reference
- ▶ Become comfortable saying "I don't know but I can find out and get back to you"

# Supervisor Tips

- ▶ You don't need to be a financial aid expert!
- ▶ Encourage your intern to attend professional development opportunities
- ▶ Discuss your building's current process/resources
- ▶ Facilitate introductions and allow for opportunities for your intern to collaborate with other staff members
- ▶ Be open to new/different ideas

# Financial Aid Completion Timeline for Interns

- ▶ **August – September**
  - ▶ Develop Financial Aid Knowledge Base!
- ▶ **Fall Semester**
  - ▶ Tier 1 Supports
  - ▶ Tier II Supports
- ▶ **Spring Semester**
  - ▶ Tier III Supports
  - ▶ Tier II Supports

# Useful Resources for Financial Aid Completion

- ▶ Gap Access
- ▶ ISACorps Member
- ▶ Free promotional materials (ISAC/Dept of Education)