

University of Wisconsin System
FINANCIAL AID DIRECTORS MEETING
Thursday, August 14, 2008
Room 5120 Grainger Hall
University of Wisconsin-Madison
10:00 am -2:30 pm

Summary

Welcome and introductions

The following were present at the meeting:

Eau Claire: Kathleen Sahloff

Green Bay: Ronald Ronnenberg

La Crosse: Louise Janke

Madison: Michelle Curtis, Susan Fischer

Milwaukee: Jane Hojan-Clark

Oshkosh: Beatriz Contreras

Parkside: Randy McCready

Platteville: Elizabeth Tucker

River Falls: Sandra Oftedahl

Stout: Beth Boisen

Superior: Anne Podgorak

Whitewater: Carol Miller, Connie Murray

Colleges: Marilyn Krump, Bill Trippett

Extension: Randy Parvin

HEAB: Connie Hutchison, Sandy Thomas

UWSA: Kris Andrews, Todd Bailey, Kelly Campbell, Sal Carranza, Kris Frederick, Bob Jokisch, Sue Michalek, Kevin Welch

Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB)/State Issues

Wisconsin Higher Education Grant (WHEG)

The WHEG grant is 113 percent committed for this year and this will carry the program through October. Last year UW institutions had to return \$169,159 in unspent funds.

A discussion followed on the returned funds. This problem is not limited to any particular school or group of schools and HEAB staff acknowledged the problem of disbursing the exact amount of WHEG funds available. The possibility of using summer as a term to spend leftover funds was suggested.

Return of Funds

HEAB staff provided a copy of the return of funds policy, which was passed at the August 2008 HEAB Board meeting. This policy clarifies HEAB policy in response to an audit request. The policy is already general practice and parallels Title IV requirements.

Fund for Wisconsin Scholars Update

HEAB staff discussed the Fund for Wisconsin Scholars (FFWS) financial aid program. HEAB has a legal contract with the Morgridge Foundation and will be reimbursed for associated costs. HEAB is responsible for the random selection of students who will receive the award from lists of eligible students provided by UW institutions. For FERPA reasons this list cannot be distributed to the institutions. Students will be sent an acceptance letter at their permanent address, which must be returned to the Foundation along with other documentation of eligibility.

The question was raised whether the financial aid offices will get an advanced look at the list. In discussion, it was noted that this might delay the disbursement of funds by up to two weeks or more. The list of eligible students is due at HEAB two weeks after the census date.

There was a discussion of how to maintain four year eligibility for students who were selected for the FFWS program and whose unmet need was filled up with "gift aid."

Other concerns included the delay in processing that might occur by mailing the acceptance letter to the student's home address.

Federal Issues

The group was updated on recent federal legislation.

Budget

Congress has recently appropriated \$62 billion in veteran's benefits, some of which is devoted to financial aid. Congress has also appropriated \$2 billion for sponsored research.

Pell

The maximum Pell Grant award has been raised to \$4,800. Several smaller programs have been eliminated.

Higher Education Act (HEA) Reauthorization

The reauthorization was passed after 14 extensions. After the bill is signed by the President, the negotiated rule making process starts. The bill will run through September 30, 2014, at the earliest.

The following highlights of the HEA re-authorization were mentioned:

1. New disclosure and reporting requirements.
2. State Commitment to Affordable Education mandates and penalties.
3. New requirements for lender-institution relations, which supersede state requirements.
4. The new lender requirements, which parallel much of what the State of Wisconsin has already implemented.
5. Title X, which extends the Truth in Lending Act to higher education loans.

Other Loan Issues

An informal round-robin discussion on Perkins loans was conducted. Several campuses announced that their loan volumes are down substantially from last year.

A suggestion was made to set up a UW System working group sometime in the next year or so to develop proposals for the next Higher Education Act reauthorization.

Lawton Grants

Lawton Grant Tracking

A question was raised whether and how financial aid offices track semesters of Lawton eligibility for students attending more than one UW campus. Current practice is that Lawton eligibility is eight semesters of eligibility at one institution.

Freshman Waivers

A question was raised about whether Lawton could be awarded to freshmen. Since Lawton is a statutory program, a waiver would be needed for freshman awards. UW Colleges has such a waiver, because of the unique mission of that institution.

Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

A summary of the August 12, 2008, teleconference was given. The deadline for having the cost calculator available on the institutional websites is August 15 2008. Five or six UW campuses will use the cost calculator developed by UW-Platteville, UW-Green Bay, and UW-Milwaukee.

A question was raised about what costs will be included in the VSA cost calculator. All institutions are using the institutional cost of attendance, which includes travel and miscellaneous expenses.

Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) Calculators

A question was raised about which EFC calculators are used by the institutions. One director observed some large discrepancies between the College Board calculator and the finaid.org calculator. Discussion showed that the directors preferred the College Board calculator for ease of use. Some institutions refer applicants to both calculators.

Alternative Loan Working Group Update

A proposal developed by the Alternative Loan working group was distributed. The UWSA Office of Procurement is examining the process for putting lenders on the product list. There was some discussion of the implications of HEA reauthorization for the product list. The reauthorization specifies numerous reporting requirements related to lists such as this.

UWSA offices have concerns about liability issues and about the ability of UWSA to keep the list up to date.

The September working group meeting will address the next steps to be taken.

FFWS Stipend and TEACH Grant Round-Robin

There was a discussion of institutional policies in awarding Fund for Wisconsin Scholars Stipends for fall 2008. While it is still early, there seems to be agreement that a typical award will be \$1,000. Institutions are looking at ways to identify the subgroups of Pell-eligible students that might be best served by this award.

The group was updated on the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grant and its implementation guidelines which are designed to ensure a degree of uniformity in awarding this grant. Campuses may decide individually when they will begin awarding the grant. This is considered to be a two-year pilot period. During the pilot, a UW System working group will meet to work on advising and implementation guidelines. President Reilly may communicate the concerns of UW System to the Wisconsin Congressional delegation. The recommendations will be forwarded to the group via email.