

FAS Helps Update Procedures and Train Staff at SMC

Challenge

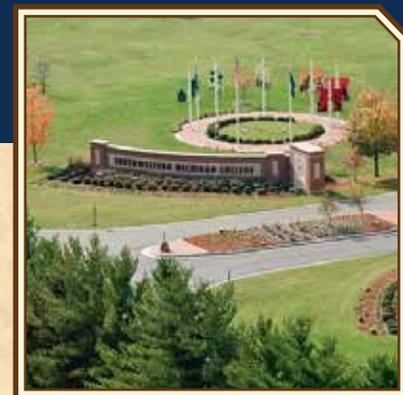
Southwestern Michigan College (SMC), a community college that averages in the state's top five percent for student transfer success, offers programs that lead to associate degrees and/or certificates. With campuses in Dowagiac and Niles, the college focuses on campus life and student service, and is currently only one of two community colleges in Michigan that offers on-campus dormitories. Eighty-five percent of the college's 2,700 students apply for financial aid, making it critical for the financial aid office to keep operations running smoothly. However, with a turnover in financial aid directors over the years, SMC needed to ensure it was appropriately compliant with government regulations, educating its staff, and fine-tuning operations.

Solution

After researching three consulting firms based on recommendations from colleagues, SMC Vice President and Chief Business Officer Susan Coulston selected FAS to provide a Financial Aid Office Assessment. Following FAS Executive Consultant Janet Hunter's two-week review of compliance, policies and procedures, the college decided to bring in FAS Senior Consultant Charlene Ervin as interim financial director while it searched for a permanent director. "Our staff respected Charlene for her knowledge," said Coulston. "They appreciated the institution's investment in their department, and were open to her suggestions. She helped us do what we needed to do to implement corrective actions for the highest priority items that Janet's report had identified."

Results

During her nine months at SMC, Ervin helped update office procedures and automate processes being done manually, making the office operate more efficiently. She also helped train the staff and mentored the new financial aid director after she came on board. "Charlene helped create better communication and enhance the image of our financial aid organization among other SMC departments," said Coulston. "She got to know our senior leadership team and explained why certain things had to happen. The institution now feels good about what our financial aid office can do and how it can continue to be compliant in serving students." Coulston also noted that FAS was flexible in extending Ervin's contract from four months to nine months. "FAS provided everything we had hoped for, and there were no surprises from a cost and billing standpoint. It was all pleasant as expected."



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Susan Coulston
Vice President
Chief Business Officer
Southwestern Michigan College

+ For additional information about services provided by FAS, call our Client Relations Team at 770.988.9447 or email us at info@FinancialAidServices.Org