FY 2024-2025:

Advisory Services Report:

Financial Aid Processes & Information Systems Review

Report No. 24-25-0005

June 6, 2025

FY 24-25 Financial Aid Advisory

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Division of Audit (DoA) performed this consulting service for the Office of Financial Aid (OFA) in alignment with our approved work plan. The purpose of this engagement was to:

- Evaluate the key information systems and system processes that support the facilitation of financial aid at Florida A&M University (FAMU).

- Evaluate the effectiveness of OFA's academic and scholarship functions and assess OFA's compliance with the Federal Student Aid Handbook and the OFA Policies and Procedures Manual.

We determined that OFA's academic and scholarship functions were compliant with the Federal Student Aid Handbook, however, opportunities for improvement were identified where processes did not fully adhere to key provisions outlined in the OFA Policies and Procedures Manual.

The Information Technology (IT) component of our analysis focused on the primary information systems that support financial aid, which included PeopleSoft Campus Solutions, the university's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, and Student Financial Planning (SFP), a cloud-based financial aid management and disbursement solution.

The assessment of financial aid processes and systems identified several manual processes between the OFA, Student Financial Services (SFS), and other business units that caused delays and increased the risk of user input errors within financial aid processing workflows. A system update, implemented on October 8, 2024, has reduced manual delays in processing student program changes, addressing prior inefficiencies. We commend the OFA for implementing this system enhancement and other process improvements, recognizing these efforts as significant steps toward streamlining financial aid processing. However, continued coordination among SFS, business units, and OFA remains essential to ensure accuracy and minimize errors. Additionally, system-level differences between the two primary financial aid information systems, PeopleSoft Campus Solutions and SFP, continue to present challenges that require additional user input for awarding and disbursing financial aid. We look forward to ongoing collaboration and continuous improvements to optimize financial aid operations.

Details of the outcomes are summarized in the table below:

	Financial Aid Processes	
	Record-Keeping for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeals and Scholarship Processes • Locating documentation related to SAP appeals and scholarships proved challenging. In the majority of the cases, documentation was incomplete or stored incorrectly in various locations.	✅
	Inconsistent Documentation of SAP Appeals • While 77% (23 of 30) of sampled appeals were well documented, 23% (7 of 30) lacked sufficient documentation to support the SAP committee's decisions. The OFA Director indicated that these appeals were overridden by the previous financial aid director, in accordance with existing procedures that allow for such overrides. However, the rationale for these overrides was not documented, and the current policy manual does not provide guidance on how to document such decisions. This highlights the need for clearer documentation requirements and accountability measures within the appeal process.	✅
	Routine Updates to Manual • OFA Policies and Procedures Manual has not been updated to include the eligibility criteria for at least two scholarships: Florida Work Experience Program (FWEP) and the Randolph Bracy Ocoee Scholarship (RBOS).	✅
	Financial Aid Information Systems	
	Manual Process Delays • Student Financial Services and other business units were identified to have been following several manual processes when communicating awards to OFA, which caused delays and created opportunities for user input errors within the financial aid processing workflows. • A system update (effective October 8, 2024) now reduces manual delays in processing student program changes. While this addresses prior inefficiencies, continued coordination between Student Financial Services, business units, and OFA is essential to ensure accurate financial aid processing and minimize errors.	✅
	Migrating to Workday: • Integration Challenges: We observed that the current system, PeopleSoft, requires data to be pushed in batches between PeopleSoft and SFP, which can lead to	✅

	delays and inefficiencies. Workday, on the other hand, offers real-time integration between modules, which can streamline processes and improve data accuracy.	
	• Manual Workflows: The current processes for private and institutional scholarships are supported by a hybrid of PeopleSoft and ImageNow, which have been observed to be cumbersome and prone to errors.	
	• Known Issues with Institutional Data: Known discrepancies and inconsistencies in the current financial aid data within PeopleSoft necessitate reconciliation and consolidation to ensure accuracy before migrating to Workday. Additionally, concerns about data integrity and the lack of well-documented processes highlight the need for cleaning and validating records, as well as documenting current procedures to effectively communicate business needs to Workday personnel.	

Legend:	✅	Controls are in place & operating effectively	✅	Controls are in place but not operating effectively	✅	Controls are not in place

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BACKGROUND

The OFA is tasked with administering financial aid programs designed to assist students in funding their education. Its primary objectives are to ensure equitable access to financial resources, support academic achievement, and enhance student retention. OFA's responsibilities include managing federal, state, and institutional aid programs such as scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study opportunities. Core functions involve determining student eligibility, overseeing disbursement processes, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements, and providing financial guidance to students and their families. Through these efforts, OFA seeks to facilitate access to education while upholding adherence to financial aid regulations.

Key regulations and guidelines relevant to SAP and scholarship processing include:

1. **The Federal Student Aid Handbook-Application and Verification Guide:** The Handbook provides essential guidance on the administration of federal financial aid programs, detailing the requirements for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). It establishes the criteria institutions must use to evaluate students' academic performance to maintain their eligibility for federal financial aid. Compliance with these regulations is critical for the appropriate distribution of federal funds.

2. **The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA):** This federal law mandates that institutions establish SAP standards to determine students' eligibility for federal financial aid. It requires that these standards be clearly communicated to students and consistently applied.

3. **Chapter 1009, Florida Statutes:** This chapter outlines provisions for financial aid in Florida, including specific scholarships and grants. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining eligibility criteria, including academic performance, for students seeking state-funded financial assistance.

4. **The OFA Policies and Procedures Manual:** This manual includes specific guidelines related to SAP evaluations and scholarship criteria. It outlines the procedures that must be followed to ensure compliance with federal and state requirements in the administration of financial aid, including the assessment of SAP and the awarding of scholarships.

U.S. Department of Education

The Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) is one of several principal offices of the U. S. Department of Education (USDOE) and plays a crucial role in providing financial aid for college students. FSA
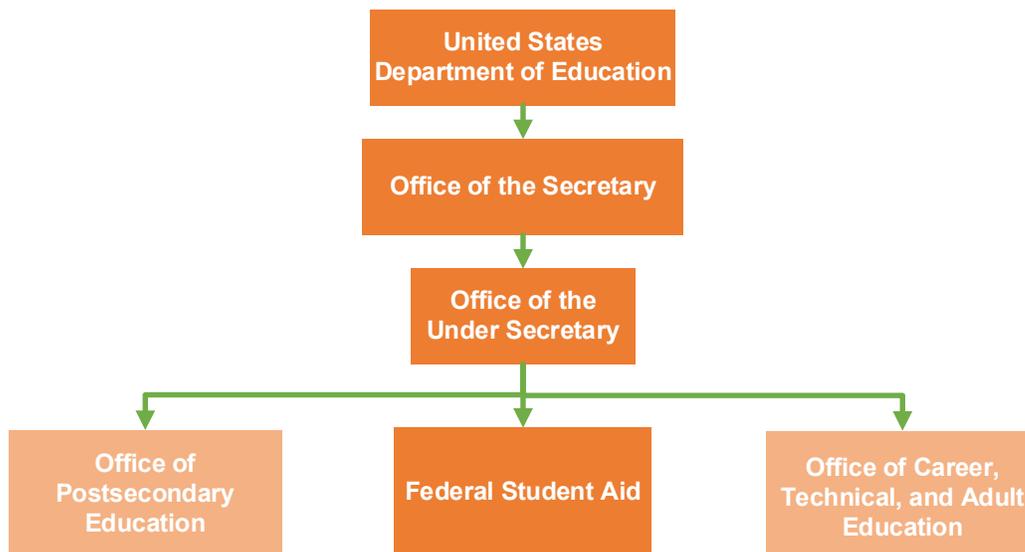
awards more than $120 billion annually in grants, work-study funds, and low-interest loans to approximately 13 million students.

FSA's process for distributing financial aid to the University is as follows:

1. Application and Review: The University submits an annual application for federal aid funding to the FSA. This includes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms from students.

2. Approval and Awarding: FSA reviews and approves the financial aid awards based on the information provided in the FAFSA applications. FSA staff determine the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and any Pell Grant award amounts.

3. Disbursement: The financial aid is distributed to the University in at least two payments, called disbursements. Typically, the school first applies the grant or loan money toward tuition, fees, and room and board if the student lives on campus. Any remaining funds are paid directly to the student for other education expenses.

The organizational chart below describes the federal roles related to the distribution of financial aid:

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            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │    United States        │
            │ Department of Education │
            └───────────┬─────────────┘
                        │
            ┌───────────▼─────────────┐
            │  Office of the Secretary│
            └───────────┬─────────────┘
                        │
            ┌───────────▼─────────────┐
            │    Office of the        │
            │    Under Secretary      │
            └───────────┬─────────────┘
         ┌──────────────┼──────────────┐
         ▼              ▼              ▼
  ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
  │ Office of  │ │  Federal   │ │  Office of    │
  │Postsecondary│ │Student Aid │ │Career,       │
  │ Education  │ │            │ │Technical, and │
  │            │ │            │ │Adult Education│
  └────────────┘ └────────────┘ └──────────────┘
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FAMU Senior Leadership

FAMU's OFA, University Scholarship Program Office, and Student Financial Services (SFS) fall under the oversight of the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who report directly to the University President. The University's organizational structure is as follows:

```
                    Timothy Beard
              Interim University President
              /                          \
   W. Rebecca Brown              Donald Palm
   Sr. Vice President/           Executive Vice
   CFO                           Preseident/COO
        |                             |
   Mattie Hood                   William E. Hudson Jr.
   Asst. VP, Finance             Vice President,
   and Administration            Student Affairs
        /        \                   /          \
Michael Dunlap   Antonita Bryant   Juan Alexander, Sr.   Dedra O'Neal
Interim          Director          Assoc. VP, Student    Director
University        Office of         Affairs              University
Controller       Procurement       Enrollment           Scholarship
Controller's                       Management           Program Office
Office                                |                    |
   |                              Lassandra Brice      Melony Washington
D'Andrea Cotton                   Director             Coordinator
Associate Controller             Office of             University
Student Financial                Financial Aid        Scholarship
Services                                               Program Office
```

As of March 31, 2025

SFS responsibilities include:
- Maintaining student accounts;
- Receiving manual award payments (e.g., scholarships); and
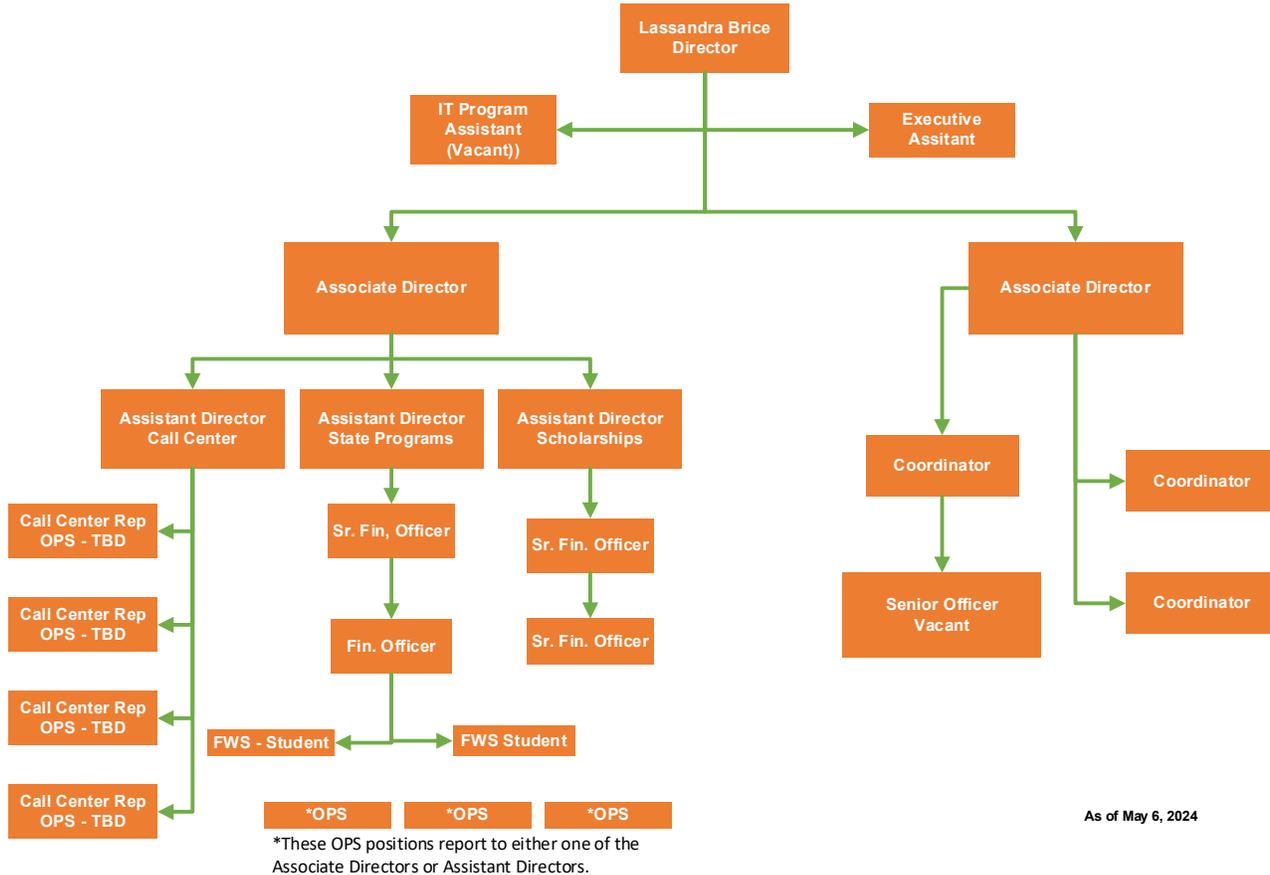- Notifying OFA about awards received.

OFA responsibilities include:
- Advising students on award status and disbursements;
- Calculating budgets;
- Tracking federal, state, private, and family contributions;
- Determine final award packages; and
- Monitoring ongoing eligibility.

FAMU's OFA

The following organizational chart depicts the organizational structure and staffing of the OFA under the leadership of the Financial Aid Director, Lassandra Brice.

Lassandra Brice Director
IT Program Assistant (Vacant))
Executive Assitant
Associate Director
Associate Director
Assistant Director Call Center
Assistant Director State Programs
Assistant Director Scholarships
Coordinator
Coordinator
Call Center Rep OPS - TBD
Sr. Fin, Officer
Sr. Fin. Officer
Senior Officer Vacant
Coordinator
Call Center Rep OPS - TBD
Call Center Rep OPS - TBD
Fin. Officer
Sr. Fin. Officer
Call Center Rep OPS - TBD
FWS - Student
FWS Student
*OPS   *OPS   *OPS

*These OPS positions report to either one of the Associate Directors or Assistant Directors.

As of May 6, 2024

Assistant Director of State Programs/Scholarships:

- **Oversee State Aid Programs:** Manage and ensure compliance with state-funded financial aid programs.
- **Scholarship Administration:** Coordinate institutional and private scholarship awards, eligibility, and disbursement.
- **Policy Compliance:** Ensure alignment with state regulations and institutional policies.
- **Reporting & Reconciliation:** Prepare reports and reconcile state funds and scholarship accounts.
- **Collaboration:** Work with internal departments to support student retention and success.

Associate Director (Federal Programs):

- **Federal Aid Compliance:** Ensure adherence to federal regulations for aid programs, including Pell Grants and Direct Loans**.**
- **Federal Aid Compliance:** Ensure adherence to federal regulations for aid programs, including Pell Grants and Direct Loans.
- **SAP Monitoring:** Oversee Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) evaluations to determine ongoing student aid eligibility.
- **Policy Implementation:** Develop and enforce policies for federal aid administration in line with institutional and federal standards.
- **Audits & Reporting**: Prepare federal aid reports and support audits to ensure program integrity.

SAP PROCESS EVALUATION

SAP is a measure of whether a student is progressing adequately toward completion of his or her course of study. It is determined in terms of grade point average and course completion. The qualitative and quantitative standards are cumulative and include whether or not a student received financial aid for all periods of enrollment. We evaluated SAP using the USDOE 2022-2023 Federal Student Aid Handbook. The requirements evaluated were: qualitative progress (GPA), quantitative progress (hours earned), and maximum timeframe to degree completion. We compared each USDOE requirement to the FAMU SAP Policy to determine alignment. The results are as follows:

FAMU's SAP Alignment with USDOE Requirements		
USDOE Student Aid Handbook Requirements	**FAMU SAP Policies**	**Does FAMU SAP Policy Align with USDOE Requirements?**
Qualitative Progress (GPA) Each institution is mandated to establish a qualitative standard, typically measured by GPA, which students must satisfy to remain eligible for financial aid	2.0 cumulative GPA for all **undergraduate, law, and pharmacy** students 3.0 cumulative GPA for all **graduate** students	✓
Quantitative Progress (hours earned) Each institution must establish a quantitative standard to ensure that students progress through their academic program at a pace conducive to timely graduation	Students (full-time or part-time) must complete a minimum of 67% of the cumulative credit hours attempted during the academic year	✓
Maximum Timeframe for Degree Completion The maximum timeframe standard sets a limit on the number of credit hours or academic terms within which students are expected to complete their degree requirements	**Bachelor's Degree** average program hours (120) multiplied by the Percentage (150%) =180 maximum hours Graduate Programs average program hours (36) multiplied by the Percentage (150%) =54	✓

The following flowchart depicts the SAP eligibility determination process used within the OFA. According to OFA's SAP process, if a student meets their SAP requirements at the time of their next evaluation, the student's financial aid may be reinstated for the upcoming academic year.
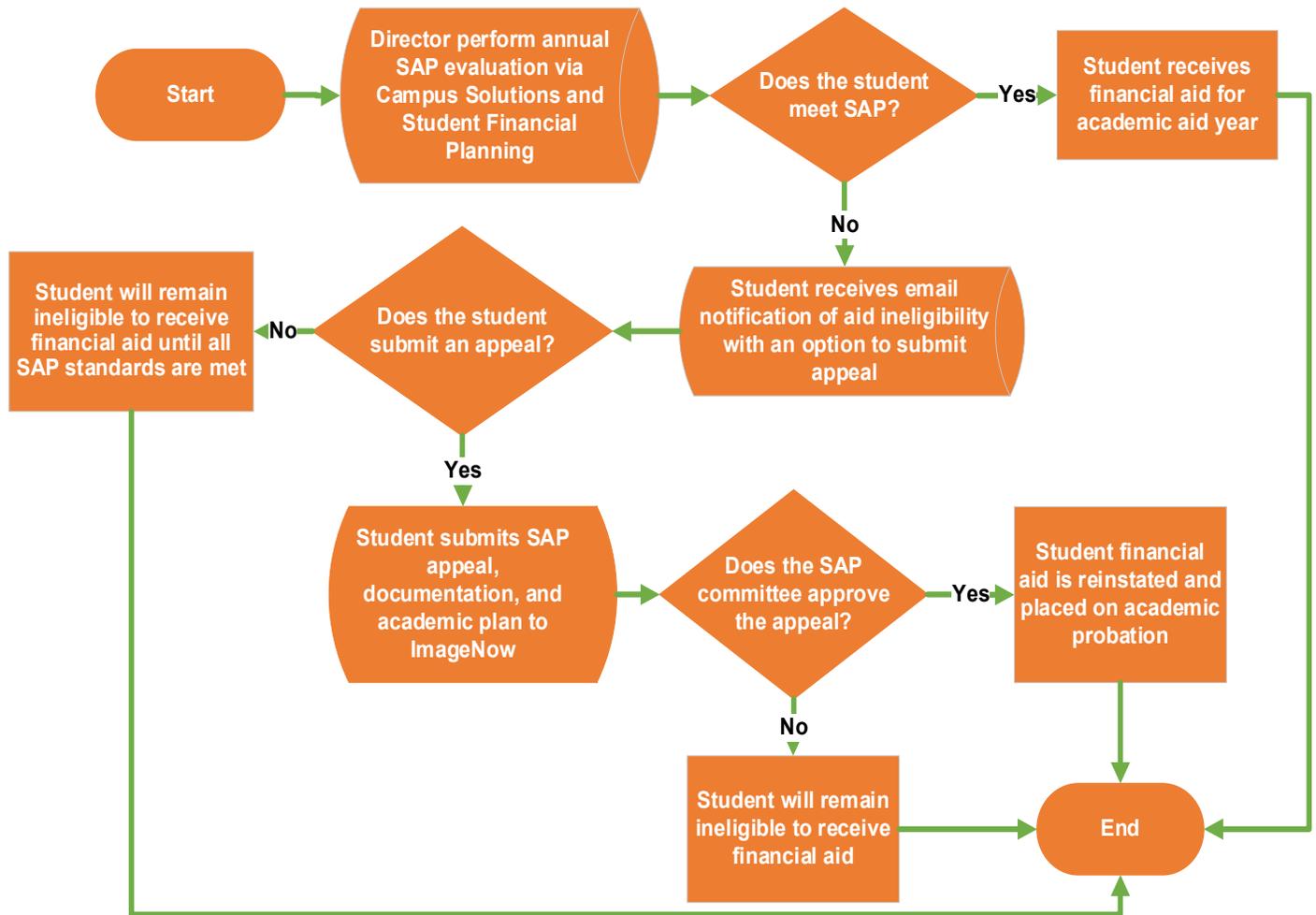
SAP Benchmarking

The USDOE has established requirements as part of the SAP standards that students must meet to maintain eligibility for federal student aid. FAMU's SAP policies were benchmarked against five (5) other SUS institutions: Florida State University (FSU), University of North Florida (UNF), University of Florida (UF), University of Central Florida (UCF), and University of South Florida (USF).

Requirements related to Qualitative Progress in Grade Point Average (GPA), Quantitative Progress in hours earned, and Maximum Time-Frame for Degree Completion were assessed. We also benchmarked FAMU's SAP appeal limit against the same SUS institutions. The results of our benchmarking are summarized below:

Qualitative Progress (GPA) Requirements

We determined FAMU's policies to be aligned with the other SUS institutions. USDOE requirements include a qualitative standard, which is typically a grade-based measure of a student's academic performance. This qualitative standard must be reviewed during each evaluation of the student's progress. The Qualitative Progress requirements are designed to ensure that students maintain a minimum GPA appropriate for academic progress. Most institutions follow a 4.0 grading scale; however, FSU College of Law uses a 100-point scale.

The table below outlines the benchmarking details for the Qualitative Progress requirements across different levels of higher education. These levels include (UGRD), Graduate (GRAD), Law, and Pharmacy (PHARM):

Level	FAMU	FSU	UNF	UF	UCF	USF
UGRD	2.0 Cum GPA	2.0 Cum GPA	2.0 Cum GPA	2.0 Cum GPA	2.0 Cum GPA	2.0 Cum GPA
GRAD	3.0 Cum GPA	3.0 Cum GPA	3.0 Cum GPA	3.0 Cum GPA	3.0 Cum GPA	3.0 Cum GPA
LAW	2.0 Cum GPA	**J.D.:** 69/100 **LL.M.:** 74/100 **J.M.:** 74/100	N/A	2.0 Cum GPA	N/A	N/A
PHARM	2.0 Cum GPA	N/A	N/A	2.0 Cum GPA	N/A	2.75 Cum GPA

NOTE: J.D. is Juris Doctorate; LL.M. is Master of Laws; and J.M. is Juris Master's.

Quantitative Progress (hours earned) Requirements

The USDOE's requirements for Quantitative Progress (hours earned) are expressed in terms of the percentage of hours earned. The student's completion percentage is calculated by dividing earned hours by hours attempted. The Quantitative Progress requirement is designed to help ensure students' progress through their program at a suitable pace to graduate within a set timeframe. Students, whether full-time or part-time, must complete a minimum percentage of their attempted credit hours each academic year. FAMU's Quantitative Progress policies are generally aligned with the SUS institutions. However, FSU and UF have more aggressive Quantitative Progress policies.

The table below outlines the benchmarking details for the Quantitative Progress requirements across different levels of higher education. These levels include (UGRD), Graduate (GRAD), Law, and Pharmacy (PHARM) for 5 SUS institutions:

Level	FAMU	FSU	UNF	UF	UCF	USF
UGRD	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%
GRAD	67%	80%	67%	75%	67%	67%
LAW	67%	80%	N/A	75%	N/A	N/A
PHARM	67%	N/A	N/A	75%	N/A	67%

Maximum Timeframe for Degree Completion Requirements

The USDOE stipulates that the maximum timeframe for degree completion cannot exceed 150% of the published length of a program. This is measured in hours attempted, and it applies to students who wish to remain eligible for federal financial assistance. While some academic areas may require more or fewer than 120 hours for graduation, the maximum time allowed to complete the degree will be the specific program hours required multiplied by 150%. FAMU's policies are aligned with the other SUS institutions, and Academic Affairs is making efforts to evaluate each FAMU degree program's goals to ensure continued compliance.

The table below outlines the benchmarking details for the Maximum Timeframe for Degree Completion requirements across different levels of higher education. These levels include (UGRD), Graduate (GRAD), Law, and Pharmacy (PHARM) for 5 SUS institutions:

Level	FAMU	FSU	UNF	UF	UCF	USF
UGRD	180 hours	180 hours	180 hours	180 hours	180 hours	180 hours
GRAD	Vary by program	Vary by program	Vary by program	Masters: 70 hours Specialist: 100 hours Doctoral: 120 hours	Masters: 70 hours Specialist: 100 hours Doctoral: 120 hours	Vary by program
LAW	135 hours	**J.D.:** 132 hours **LL.M.:** 36 hours **J.M.:** 45 hours	N/A	140 hours	N/A	N/A
PHARM	225 hours	N/A	N/A	233 hours	N/A	Vary by program

SAP Appeal Policy

The USDOE does not provide a specific requirement related to the number of student SAP appeals. Benchmarking was performed with five (5) other SUS institutions, and it was determined that while FAMU limits the number of student SAP appeals to three (3), none of the other SUS institutions placed a limit on the number of appeals students can file.

SCHOLARSHIP PROCESS EVALUATION

The scholarship process plays a pivotal role in facilitating access to higher education for students demonstrating outstanding academic or athletic achievements, with consideration also given to financial need. Scholarships are uniquely advantageous in that they offer financial support without the obligation of repayment, thus lightening the financial burden on students. These awards are sourced from a diverse array of providers, including state agencies, educational institutions, specific departments, private corporations, and philanthropic individuals, each contributing to a rich ecosystem of support for students' educational pursuits. Our focus was to map out a clear, visual representation of the procedural steps involved.

Building upon the foundational understanding of the scholarship process and the significant role of OFA in managing these crucial financial aids, our assessment reveals key outcomes that highlight

areas for improvement and potential risks within the current operational framework. The insights drawn from this examination are critical in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the existing processes, and they underscore the necessity for strategic adjustments to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and reliability of scholarship management

Scholarship Process Flowcharts

State Scholarship Process:

The state scholarship process involves various programs provided by the State of Florida, including the Florida Bright Futures (FBF) scholarship program managed by the FLDOE Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA). To receive aid, students must submit a completed Florida Financial Aid Application during their final high school year for OSFA review. OSFA determines eligibility for the FBF scholarship program, generating Master Eligibility Lists (MEL) for universities. Notably, FAMU's OFA is authorized to award state scholarships only upon OSFA confirmation.
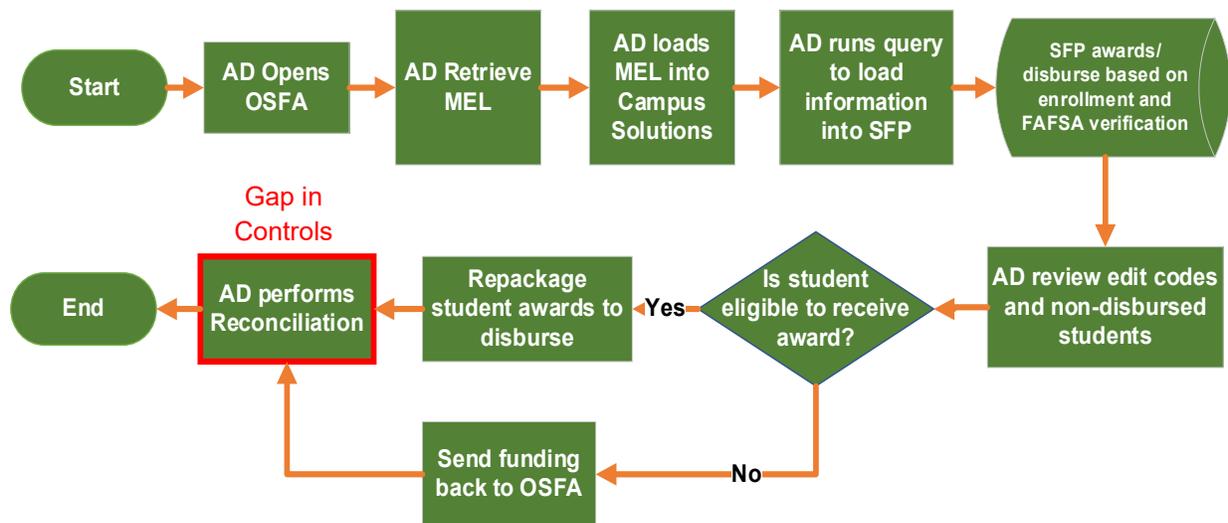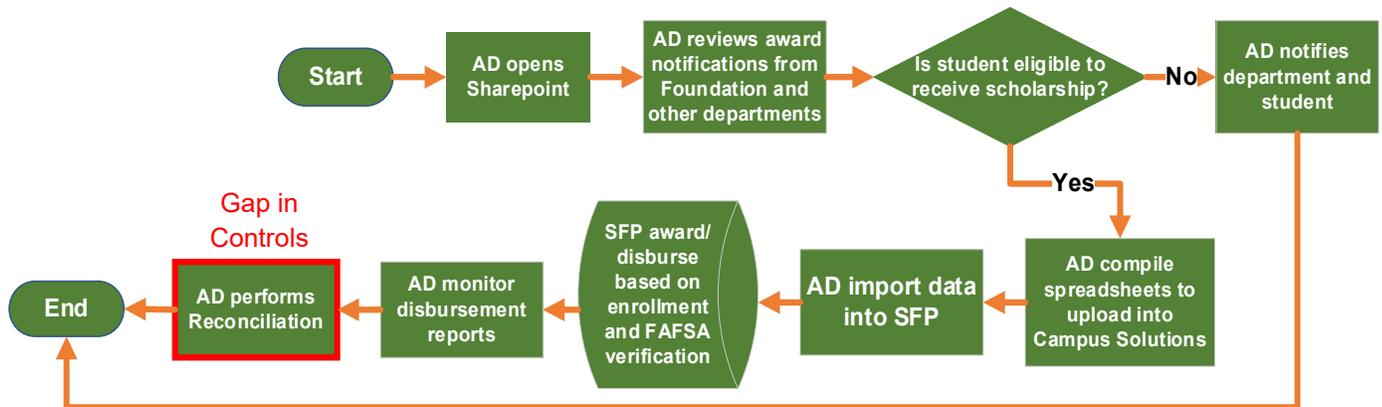

Gap in Controls:

- The Assistant Director (AD) is tasked with both the processing of scholarships and the reconciliation of accounts related to these activities.

Institutional Scholarship Process:

Institutional scholarships constitute financial aid awards directly administered by the institution, granted to students based on diverse criteria such as academic achievements, leadership qualities, and extracurricular involvement, as determined by the institution. The specific criteria for these scholarships are established by the offering institution, and the application process is typically

managed through the university's financial aid office. These awards may be merit-based, need-based, or a hybrid of both. Authorization for awarding institutional scholarships lies with the FAMU OFA, contingent upon confirmation from departments.

Gap in Controls: The AD of Financial Aid is tasked with both the processing of scholarships and the reconciliation of accounts related to these activities.

Private Scholarship Process:

Since August 2023, the University Scholarship Program Office has assumed responsibility for processing private scholarships, such as Thurgood Marshall and the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Private scholarships are essential financial aids for students, offering relief from educational expenses. These scholarships come from diverse sources such as businesses, charities, and religious institutions, with criteria covering a wide range of factors like academic achievements and special talents. Notably, in the process, FAMU SFS receives private scholarship checks first, then notifies FAMU OFA to begin award processing through the ImageNow imaging system.
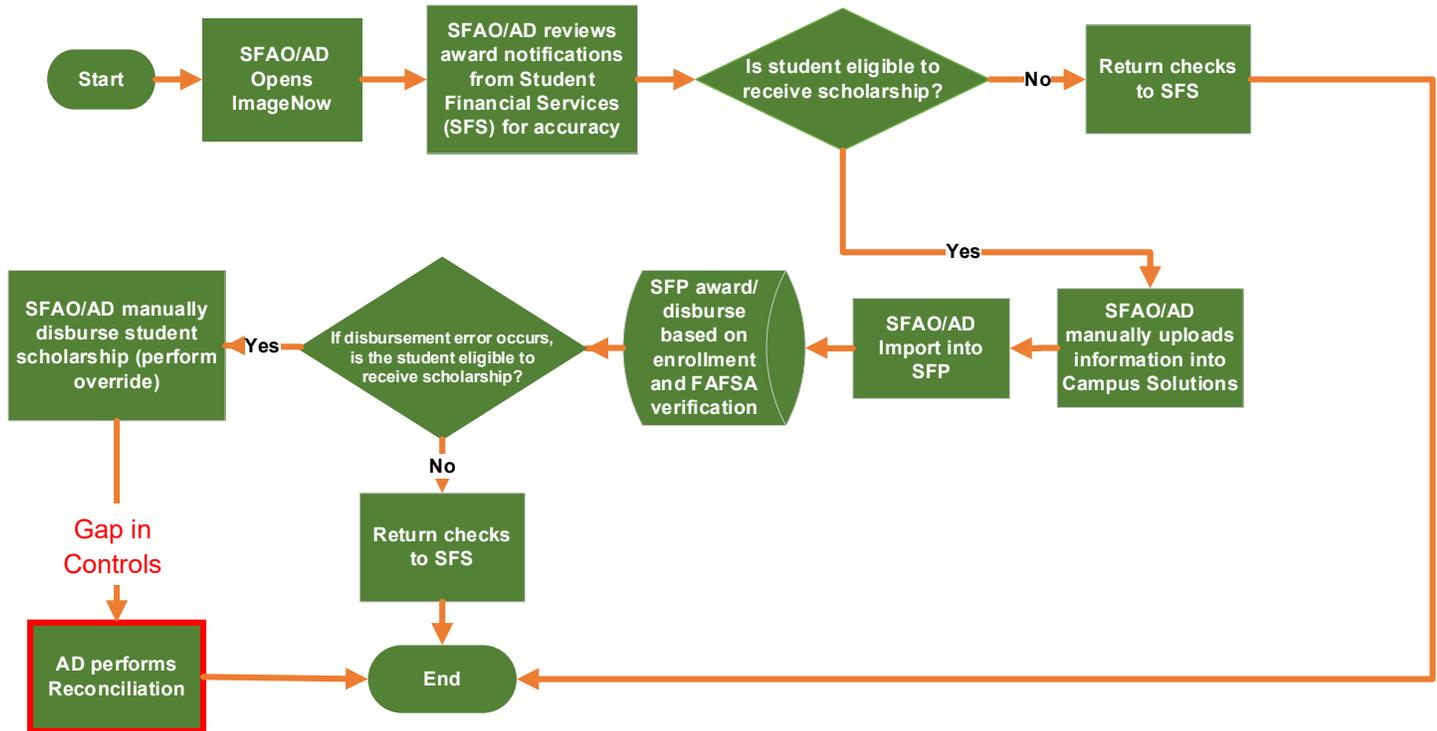
Gap in Controls:

>•Senior Financial Aid Officer (SFAO) and Assistant Director (AD) of Financial Aid are tasked with both the processing of scholarships, and the AD performs reconciliation of accounts related to these activities.

OFA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

Oracle PeopleSoft Campus Solutions

Oracle PeopleSoft Campus Solutions is an integrated suite of applications that manages various aspects of student administration. Campus Solutions handles core administrative functions related to student records, admissions, academic advising, and financial aid management through the integration of process-specific modules and maintains the data referenced for the performance of each of these core administrative processes.

Specifically, in the context of financial aid, Campus Solutions facilitates the management of student information, which includes the processing and disbursement of financial aid packages and maintaining student academic records. Scholarship award data is first entered into Campus Solutions,

where the scholarship details (such as amount, donor, and eligibility criteria) are recorded. Scholarship award data in Campus Solutions is broken down into fund codes (which categorize and manage the different sources of financial aid) and by item type (which represents the specific categories of charges or credits applied to students' accounts).

In this capacity, Campus Solutions acts as the central repository for student-related data and coordinates data flow across different departments within the university.

Oracle Student Financial Planning

Oracle SFP is a cloud-based solution specifically designed to automate the complexities of financial aid processing. Through automation, SFP is designed to streamline the financial aid lifecycle by providing personalized financial aid packages tailored to the student's needs based on information maintained in Campus Solutions. SFP includes a suite of tools for managing financial aid compliance, eligibility criteria, and communicating award notifications to students, as well as serving as a student portal to better plan and receive insight into their financial obligations and options.

SFP focuses exclusively on financial aid processing and planning, leveraging advanced automation to ensure that compliant award packages are delivered to students in accordance with state and federal regulations. SFP uses real-time updates from Campus Solutions to perform eligibility checks on the past and future student financial aid disbursements.

INFORMATION SYSTEM BUSINESS PROCESS FLOW

1 Scholarship Entry & Data Integration

Scholarship data is first entered into the Campus Solutions system, where the scholarship details (such as the amount, donor, and eligibility criteria) are recorded. Campus Solutions serves as the primary repository for student records, ensuring that the student's scholarship information is associated with their academic and financial records.

2 Financial Aid Packaging

SFP processes each student's complete financial aid package. SFP uses real-time data from Campus Solutions to adjust the student's financial aid package and considers all awards along with other award aid sources (like federal grants or loans). The system ensures that the total aid awarded complies with regulatory limits and avoids over-awarding.

3 Award Notification & Acceptance

SFP generates a personalized financial aid package for the student. The system sends notifications to the student, providing a breakdown of their financial aid from all sources. The student can accept or decline the financial aid package (or specific components) through SFP's student-facing portal.

4 Disbursement of Funds

Once the student accepts the financial aid package in SFP, a message will be generated from the system to Campus Solutions. Campus Solutions will verify the student's enrollment status, adjust for any tuition or fee charges, and then post the scholarship amount to the student's account. Scholarship funds are applied directly to the student's university account to cover tuition, fees, and other eligible expenses.
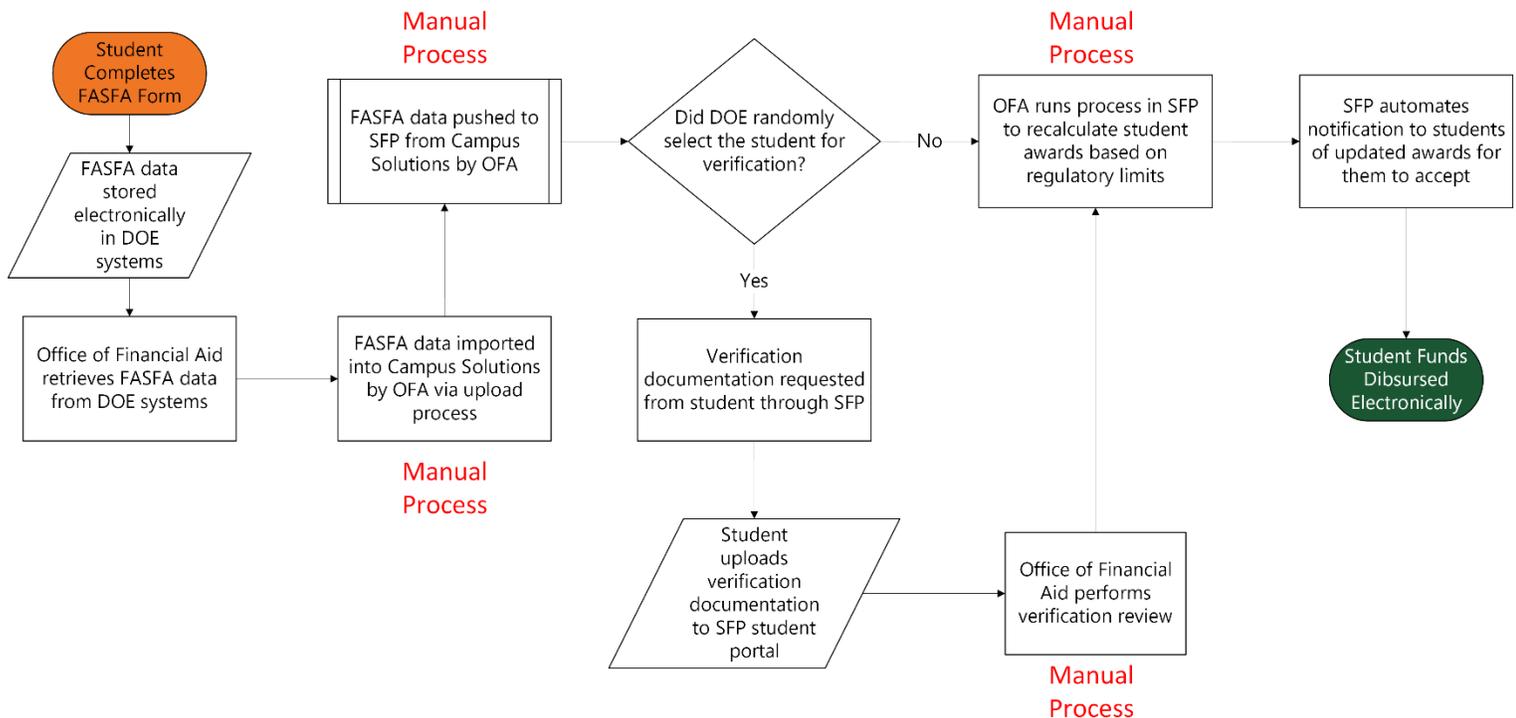
5 Reconciliation & Reporting

Campus Solutions generates financial reports and reconciles the disbursed scholarship amounts with the university's financial systems. Campus Solutions is utilized to ensure all scholarship funds have been correctly allocated and reported, while SFP provides updates from Campus Solutions as changes are made to student accounts for student and OFA reference.
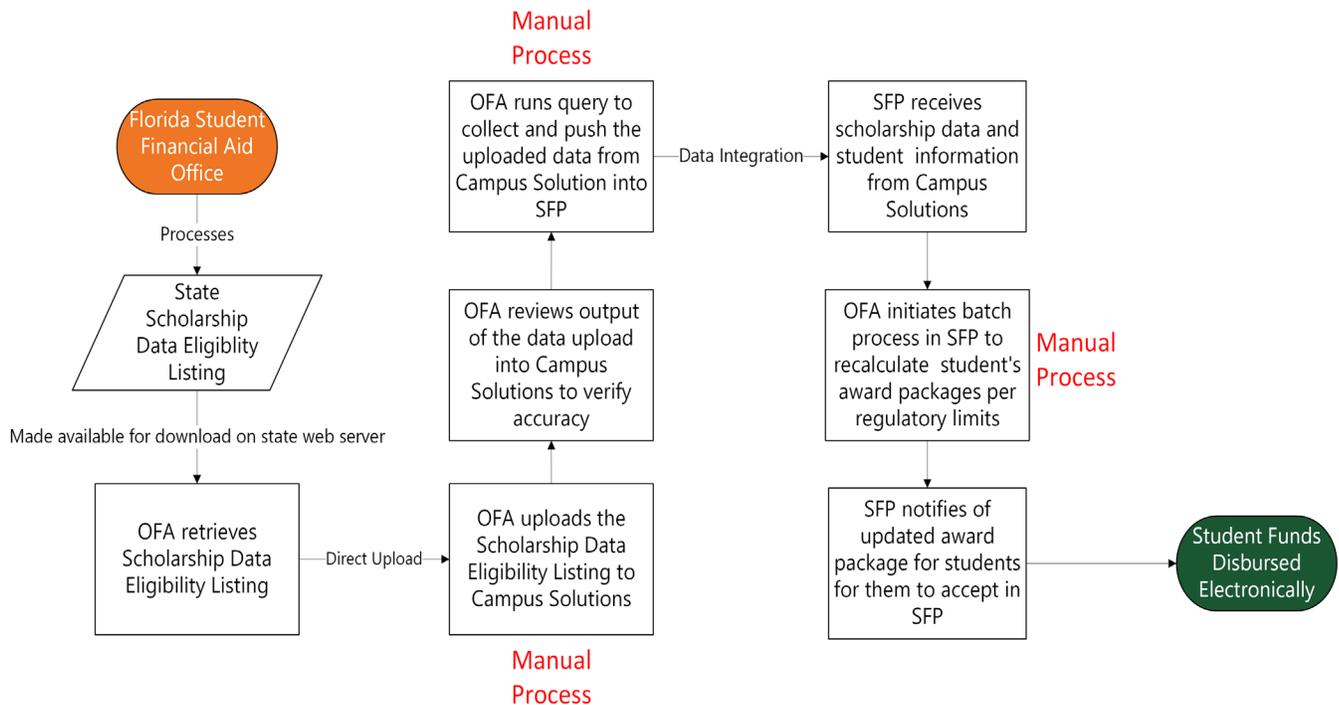
FAMU FASFA AWARDS PROCESS OVERVIEW

FASFA awards are processed and communicated electronically to FAMU by the USDOE. OFA receives electronic access to DOE information systems from which they pull financial aid information for FAMU students. The financial aid information is then pulled into Campus Solutions, and from there imported into SFP to be applied and calculated to student financial aid award packages.

Flowchart:

- Student Completes FASFA Form
- FASFA data stored electronically in DOE systems
- Office of Financial Aid retrieves FASFA data from DOE systems
- FASFA data imported into Campus Solutions by OFA via upload process — **Manual Process**
- FASFA data pushed to SFP from Campus Solutions by OFA — **Manual Process**
- Did DOE randomly select the student for verification?
  - No → OFA runs process in SFP to recalculate student awards based on regulatory limits — **Manual Process**
  - Yes → Verification documentation requested from student through SFP
- Student uploads verification documentation to SFP student portal
- Office of Financial Aid performs verification review — **Manual Process**
- SFP automates notification to students of updated awards for them to accept
- Student Funds Disbursed Electronically

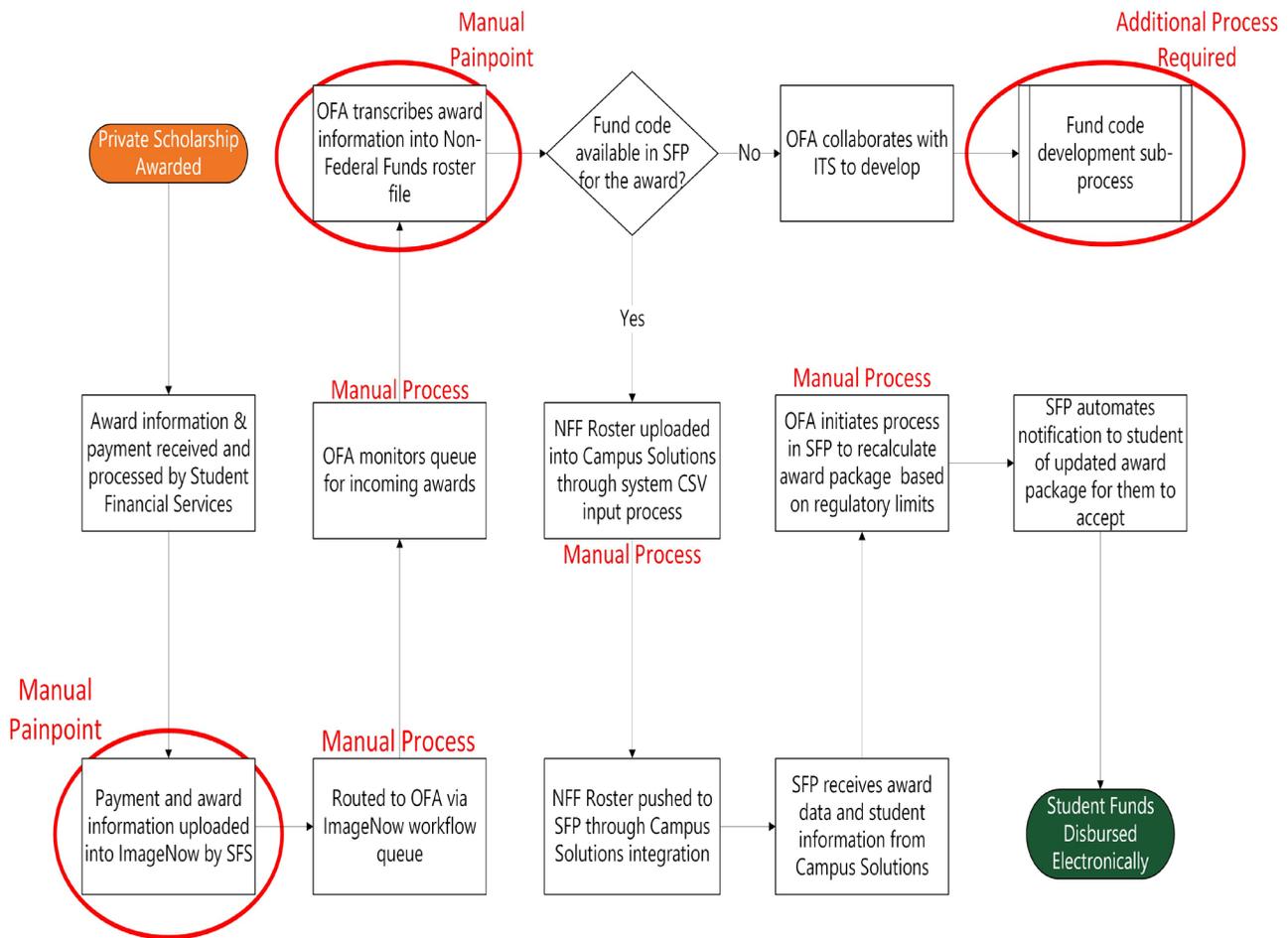# FAMU STATE AWARDS PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) makes a Master Eligibility Listing (MEL) of state awards available to SUS universities. OFA electronically accesses FDOE information systems to receive information about FAMU students who have received state awards. The state award information is imported into Campus Solutions, and from there loaded into a spreadsheet for import into SFP, where the awards are applied and calculated into student financial aid award packages.

FAMU PRIVATE AWARDS PROCESS OVERVIEW

Private awards are received by Student Accounts, who process the award and verifies funding. Processing by Student Accounts includes uploading the award and corresponding documentation into ImageNow, an outside document management system, for routing to OFA. OFA accesses the award information and documents the details of the award into a spreadsheet file for import into Campus Solutions, and from there imports the award into SFP, where the awards are applied and calculated into student financial aid packages. (See the Fund Code Creation Process Overview below for the *Additional Process Required*).

# FAMU INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS PROCESS OVERVIEW

Institutional awards follow a similar business process to private awards. While Student Accounts uses ImageNow to route award information to OFA, institutional awards are received by OFA from either the FAMU Foundation, Graduate Studies, or Sponsored Research via SharePoint. The award notification includes details of the students receiving awards and award amounts. OFA documents the award details into a spreadsheet file for import into Campus Solutions, and from there imports the award into SFP, where the awards are applied and calculated into student financial aid packages. (See the Fund Code Creation Process Overview below for the *Additional Process Required*.)
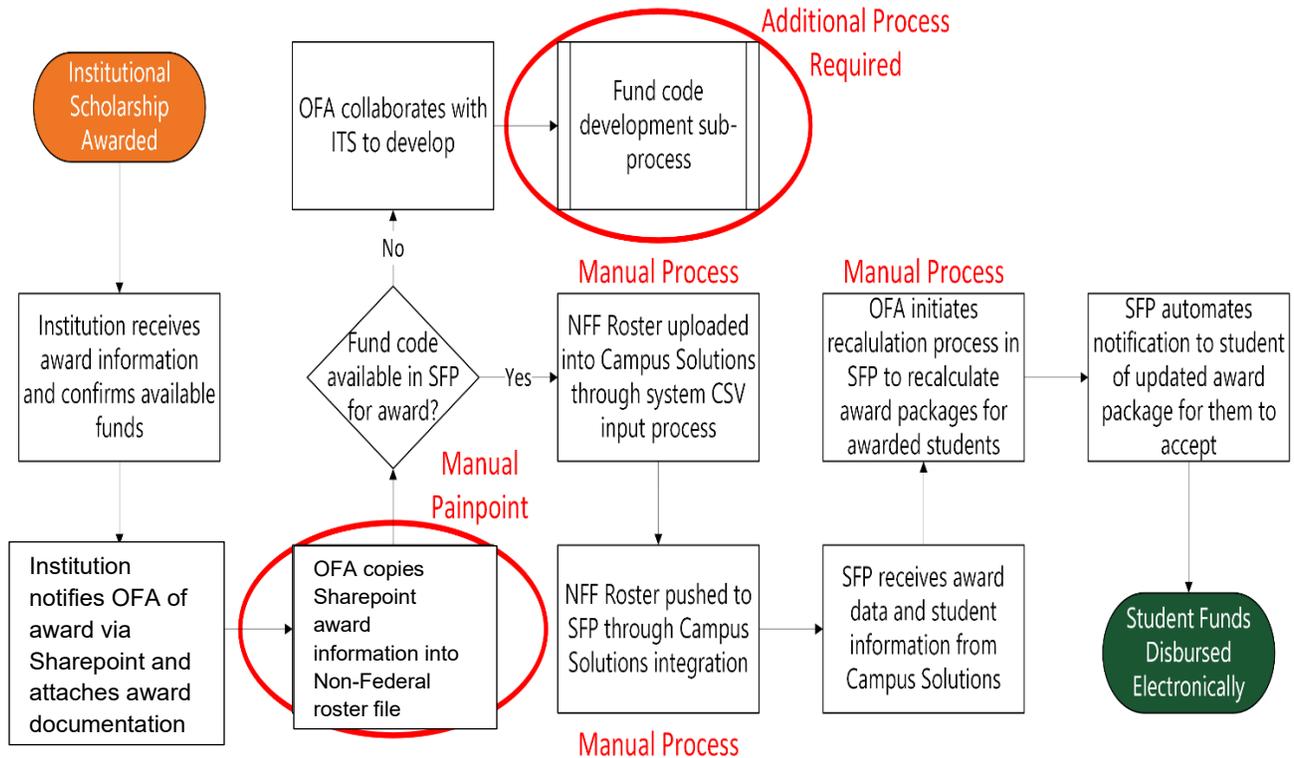
FUND CODE CREATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

As Campus Solutions and SFP use "Fund Codes" for different purposes, in instances of unique awards that do not have a pre-existing fund code developed for them in SFP, that fund code must be developed before the award can be entered into SFP. Additionally, Campus Solutions must associate an item type, which represents the categories of charges to a student's account, to a fund code for the fund code to be entered into Campus Solutions, while SFP does not utilize item types as a data field. Therefore, the following sub-process must be followed when entering a new award into SFP, affecting the business process of new private and institutional awards.
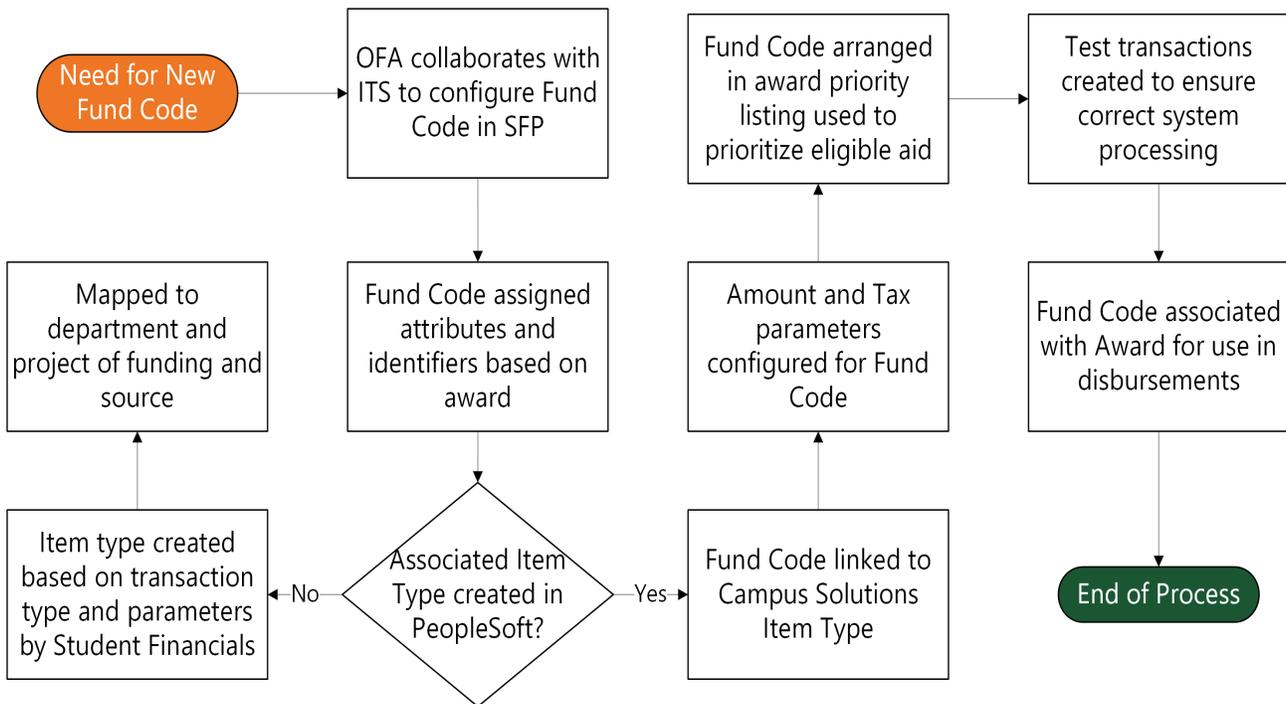
OFA ADVISORY CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

To: Dr. William Hudson, Vice President for Student Affairs

Lassandra Brice, Director, Office of Financial Aid

From: Joseph Maleszewski, Vice President for Audit and Chief Audit Executive

CC: Trystal Wright, Audit Director

Crisencia Brown, Auditor & Investigator

Date: April 1, 2025

Re: Request for Corrective Action Plan: Financial Aid Processes and Systems Review Advisory

We appreciate the cooperation of you and your team during the recent **Financial Aid Processes and Systems Review Advisory.** The report, issued on April 1, 2025, includes observations and recommendations aimed at enhancing the operations, internal controls, and compliance within your department.

The Division of Audit is requesting that you provide an official corrective action plan to address the observations identified by **April 15, 2025.** The corrective action plan should include at a minimum the following items:

- Management's planned action to develop, or improve, controls related to the findings;
- Responsible party for each planned management action; and
- Expected completion date for each planned management action.

In accordance with Division of Audit's charter, we will be performing follow-up reviews of the corrective actions on or immediately after the target completion dates provided in the Plan. We perform follow-up reviews to determine the status and effectiveness of the implementation of the corrective actions.

Please ensure that the process owner, the manager responsible for implementing the corrective action, and the Executive Owner have signed the corrective action plan before submitting the official response to our office.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Thanks.

Corrective Action Plan Form
No. 24-25-0005 – Financial Aid Processes and Systems Review Advisory

Issue	DoA Recommendations	Corrective Action Plan	Responsible Party & Implementation Date	Resources Required for Implementation
FINANCIAL AID PROCESSES & PROCEDURES				
Record-Keeping for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeals and Scholarship Processes Locating documentation related to SAP appeals and scholarships proved challenging. In the majority of cases, documentation was incomplete or stored incorrectly in various locations.	The Director of OFA should implement a centralized, standardized, and secure document management process for all Financial Aid documentation, including SAP appeals and scholarships. Management should ensure staff are uploading documentation into each student's individual file even if it is submitted as a batch file.	To enhance the SAP process, students are encouraged to upload SAP appeal and supporting documentation to their Financial Aid student portal. The OFA will continue training staff to ensure hard copies received are uploaded appropriately.	Responsible Party: OFA management Implementation Date: May 2025	*(Examples: Additional Personnel, New Technology, New Process or Workflow, etc.)* Ongoing student communication campaigns. Staff training
Inconsistent Documentation of SAP Appeals While 77% (23 of 30) of sampled appeals were well documented, 23% (7 of 30) lacked sufficient documentation to support the SAP committee's decisions. The OFA Director indicated that these appeals were overridden by the	As the Director of OFA has the authority to override appeal decisions, this authority should be clearly documented in the policies and procedures manual. Additionally, the manual should be enhanced to outline the required documentation process for such overrides to ensure clear	The OFA Director will ensure supporting documentation is available and clearly document as needed.	Responsible Party: OFA Director/management Implementation Date: May 2025	N/A

Issue	DoA Recommendations	Corrective Action Plan	Responsible Party & Implementation Date	Resources Required for Implementation
previous financial aid director, in accordance with existing procedures that allow for such overrides. However, the rationale for these overrides was not documented, and the current policy manual does not provide guidance on how to document such decisions. This highlights the need for clearer documentation requirements and accountability measures within the appeal process.	documentation and accountability in the appeals process. While SAP committee members currently participate in routine training, management should include training related to overrides of appeal decisions.			
Routine Updates to Manual OFA Policies and Procedures Manual has not been updated to include the eligibility criteria for at least two state scholarships: Florida Work Experience Program (FWEP) and the Randolph Bracy Ocoee Scholarship.	Management should perform periodic reviews to determine whether any new scholarship awards are announced and update the Policy & Procedures Manual accordingly.	The OFA agrees with the recommendation.	Responsible Party: OFA Implementation Date: April 2025	

Division of Audit
Accountability ● Integrity ● Efficiency

Issue	DoA Recommendations	Corrective Action Plan	Responsible Party & Implementation Date	Resources Required for Implementation
FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION SYSTEMS				
Manual Process Delays A system update (effective October 8, 2024) now reduces manual delays in processing student program changes. While this addresses prior inefficiencies, continued coordination between Student Financial Services, business units, and OFA is essential to ensure accurate financial aid processing and minimize errors.	The Director of OFA should monitor the effectiveness of the system update and ensure ongoing training for staff on managing student program changes and financial aid disbursements in Campus Solutions and SFP.	The OFA complies to the recommendation.	Responsible Party: OFA Director and managers assigned **Implementation Date:** May 2025	N/A
MIGRATING TO WORKDAY				
Integration Challenges It was observed that the current system, PeopleSoft, requires data to be pushed in batches between PeopleSoft and SFP, which can lead to delays and inefficiencies. Workday, on the other hand, offers real-time integration between modules, which can streamline processes and improve data accuracy.	The Director of OFA should train staff on functionalities that Workday can provide that are not currently available within PeopleSoft. The following functionalities of Workday should be considered as topics for additional training: • Workday offers real-time integration between modules rather than having to push data in batches between PeopleSoft	Workday Student Information System is not implemented. The Office of Financial Aid Director will confirm the features and resume with training accordingly after the system is implemented.	Responsible Party: OFA Director **Implementation Date:** May 2028	

Issue	DoA Recommendations	Corrective Action Plan	Responsible Party & Implementation Date	Resources Required for Implementation
	and SFP. The Director of OFA should perform a business process analysis and impact analysis for their current processes to identify how the new system's functionality will affect their processes and prepare a new process to conform to the system.			
Manual Workflows The current processes for private and institutional scholarships are supported by a hybrid of PeopleSoft and ImageNow, which might have been observed to cumbersome and prone to errors.	The Director of OFA should train staff on the automated workflows and reconciliations processes that will allow for streamlining data solely in Workday, as opposed to the current processes for private and institutional scholarships that are supported between a hybrid of PeopleSoft and ImageNow.	Workday Student Information System is not implemented. The Office of Financial Aid Director will confirm the features and resume with training accordingly after the system is implemented.	Responsible Party: Implementation Date May 2028	
Known Issues with Institutional Data Known discrepancies and inconsistencies in the current financial aid data within PeopleSoft, necessitate reconciliation and consolidation to ensure accuracy before migrating to Workday. Additionally, concerns about data integrity and the lack of well-documented processes highlight the need for	The Director of OFA should take the following actions regarding how the data will be prepared and migrated including: • Reconciling and consolidating current financial aid data; • Cleaning and validating consolidated data records to ensure integrity; • Documenting current processes and procedures for OFA	The OFA will begin reviewing student data and identifying all discrepancies, ensuring all student financial aid data is accurate before implementation. This process is scheduled to begin summer 2025.	Responsible Party: OFA Director Implementation Date May 2026	

Issue	DoA Recommendations	Corrective Action Plan	Responsible Party & Implementation Date	Resources Required for Implementation
cleaning and validating records, as well as documenting current procedures to effectively communicate business needs to Workday personnel.	reference when communicating the business needs to Workday personnel of what functionalities they will require from the new system; • Identifying which processes require updates to accommodate the new systems; • Performing an assessment of the current process used for reporting			

The above plan was approved by:

_William Hudson, Jr_____   5/16/2025
                                                     _____
Dr. William Hudson, Jr., VP of Student Affairs   **Date**

                                                     __May 7, 2025_____
_Lassandra Brice_____   _ **Date**

Lassandra Brice, Director of Financial Aid

_Donald Palm_____   5/20/2025
                                                     _____
Dr. Donald Palm, EVP/Chief Operating Officer   **Date**

Note: As of the report date, all observations on the corrective action plan are still open, pending the receipt of documentation confirming the implementation of corrective actions.

APPENDIX A: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this advisory was to:

- Evaluate the SAP processes for compliance with requirements and best practices with a specific emphasis on academic and scholarship procedures, which ensure consistent application of academic policies in determining and adjusting financial aid allocations.

- Evaluate the processes for awarding and disbursing state, private, and institutional scholarships for compliance with requirements and best practices, verifying the appropriate distribution of scholarship funds to eligible students.

- Evaluate the current information system processes related to the receipt and distribution of federal, state, and private financial aid awards;

- Identify constraints and gaps between processes and system limitations that may delay or impede the timely disbursement of student financial aid awards; and

- Provide recommendations to enhance the current financial aid processes and to prepare the Office of Financial Aid for transitioning to the Workday Enterprise Resource Planning system.

Scope

Examination of information systems and operational processes related to financial aid, with a primary emphasis on SAP, state, private, and institutional scholarship processed for the academic aid year 2022-2023.

Methodology

The methodology for this service included interviews with relevant stakeholders to gather insights into operational practices and challenges, detailed reviews of system documentation, process flowcharts, and relevant policies and procedures to understand the information systems used to facilitate the financial aid processes. Methodologies also included:

- Walkthroughs of key financial aid processes within PeopleSoft Campus Solutions and SFP were performed with key stakeholders to identify potential inefficiencies, gaps, or manual workarounds, focusing specifically on the award intake, student data entry and verification, award packaging, and disbursement processes.

- Utilization of benchmarking techniques to compare financial aid processes against industry standards and peer institutions.

- Creation of Process Flowcharts to visually map out the sequence of financial aid procedures and identify potential inefficiencies or gaps; and

- Performance of data testing of the SAP Appeals and scholarship processes to verify compliance with established criteria and regulations.

DISTRIBUTION

Responsible Managers

William Hudson Jr, Vice President, Student Affairs

Lassandra Brice, Director, Financial Aid

FAMU Senior Leadership

Timothy Beard, Interim University President

Donald Palm, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Allyson Watson, Provost and Vice president for Academic Affairs

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Vice President for Audit and Chief Audit Executive

STATEMENT OF ACCORDANCE

The Division of Audit's mission is to enhance and protect the value of FAMU and its stakeholders by providing excellence in risk-based and objective assurance, advice, and insight through the promotion of accountability, integrity, and efficiency.

We conducted this consulting service in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our recommendations.

Please address inquiries regarding this report to the Division of Audit at (850) 412-5479.
https://www.famu.edu/administration/audit/