Financial Aid Management and Student Services

Creating Efficiencies to Drive Operational Success and Student Satisfaction

Maintaining an efficient, compliant, and service-oriented financial aid operation is no small task for colleges and universities, yet the need to do so has never been greater. Having a high-functioning financial aid office plays a key role in helping schools meet their strategic enrollment and retention goals, while also avoiding potential costly liabilities.

Our Financial Aid Management and Student Services (FAMSS) team is focused on helping schools optimize their operations, reduce administrative burden, and improve the overall experience for students. We accomplish this by working with your staff to leverage existing strengths, and by sharing our in-depth knowledge of federal regulations, industry best practices, and proven technology solutions.

ATTAIN Partners

Assessment and Compliance

From preventive strategies to corrective action support, Attain Partners has the proven expertise and depth of knowledge to help you achieve and maintain good compliance standing.

Our services include an independent, comprehensive assessment of your financial aid operations, assistance with resolving audit and program review findings, including file reconstructions, and policy and procedures development.

Operational Review

Our comprehensive assessment evaluates the people, processes, and technology that comprise your financial aid operations. Following our review, we provide schools with a customized action plan to reduce compliance risks, improve efficiencies, and streamline the flow of paper and electronic data.

Similar to a federal program review, our service starts with an on-campus visit during which we interview staff and review institutional eligibility documents, policies and procedures, and student files. We also analyze the staffing level and expertise in the financial aid office, examine how operations are coordinated at the institution, and evaluate the general use of technology to support financial aid processing.

By conducting an inventory of existing policies and procedures, and reviewing how the policies and procedures are applied in a sampling of student files, we can help uncover any processing gaps or compliance shortfalls. We then provide detailed recommendations to help put you on the right track for meeting applicable regulatory requirements and best practices.

A preventive checkup before your next audit or program review can give you a jump on any needed corrective actions.

Top Ten Program Review Findings

Attain Partners' comprehensive assessment will help ensure your school is prepared for a federal program review. We will specifically review areas that are identified by ED as part of their Top 10 Program Review Findings:

1. Student Status – Inaccurate/Untimely Reporting
2. Return to Title IV (R2T4) Calculation Errors
3. Entrance/Exit Counseling Deficiencies
4. Verification Violations
5. Consumer Information Requirements Not Met
6. Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy Not Adequately Developed/Monitored
7. Student Credit Balance Deficiencies
8. Lack of Administrative Capability
9. Account Records Inadequate/Not Reconciled
10. Crime Awareness Requirements Not Met

Operational and technology expertise at your fingertips

System Review & Implementation

Is your current financial aid system meeting your institution's needs? Are nontraditional semesters or course offerings making packaging more challenging for your financial aid staff?

Deploying or reviewing a new student financial aid or student information system (SIS) requires careful planning, and core knowledge about critical interfaces and processing requirements. A poorly analyzed system and implementation can be costly both in dollars and staff resources, greatly reducing the return on investment for your school.

Attain Partners has the expertise to help. We will assist with reviewing your business needs, creating a business requirements document for the new system and outline all required planning activities to ensure a successful relationship between the school and the software vendor. We can also assist with developing a project charter that details tasks and task ownership to ensure accountability for the vendor, as well as the users, in order to meet deliverables and milestones for the project.

We work closely with school officials to establish and maintain a budget monitoring system to ensure the proper level of senior management approval and controls. Finally, we provide recommendations to enhance your school's ability to integrate your current SIS with other systems and services across offices and divisions.

Workflow Process Review

Financial aid processing can be cumbersome and, if not properly structured, it may result in delayed services to students and their guardians. When funds are delayed, students may become unable to attend an institution.

Attain Partners can identify the root cause of financial aid processing delays whether they are procedural, operational, or systems-related. We then design a tailored improvement plan and provide implementation assistance. By reviewing the overall lifecycle of a typical student file and tracking the milestone events, we can compare the school's current workflow against industry standards and provide benchmarks. From there, we can recommend and assist with implementing system upgrades, training, or other services to improve the quality and timeliness of financial aid services to students.

Interim Management, Staffing, and Remote Processing

When there is a key financial aid or student accounts vacancy, having access to highly trained, experienced and readily available interim staff can help to ensure uninterrupted services for your students, and provide

Interim Management

The director of financial aid is a key position and turnover can disrupt a school's overall operations. Under our interim management services, we assign an experienced consultant to serve as an interim director or fill another supervisory position, ensuring uninterrupted financial aid services for students and continued leadership for staff until a permanent replacement is in place. We can also assist with the recruitment and selection of a permanent replacement, as well as design a transition plan for the new director.

Our consultants have significant on-campus experience, typically at the director or associate director level. On average, each of our consultants has approximately 20 years' experience in financial aid or student accounts.

Interim Staffing / On-Campus Processing Support

Schools often need extra help at the beginning of an academic period when financial aid processing is at its peak. Along with our interim management service, our consultants are available to work on site to assist with short-term financial aid and student accounts processing tasks.

You don't have to sacrifice quality student service especially during busy times of the year. Our trained financial aid professionals can step in and help you get over the hurdle of processing backlogs by providing knowledgeable, short-term staffing assistance—helping to ensure timely delivery of financial aid funds for your students.

Rely on our expert interim management services to ensure uninterrupted student services so you can evaluate more permanent staffing solutions.

Remote Processing

If your school is seeking a remote processing solution for your financial aid operations, we can establish secure access to your student information system and process transactions directly in your school's financial aid module.

Our solution includes deploying a customized collaboration website using Microsoft Yammer technology in order to facilitate secure document exchange between Attain Partners and your school, and ensure full protection of personally identifiable student information.

Our remote processing services include:

- Document Tracking & Follow-up
- Processing Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs)
- Verification
- Awarding, Packaging, & Notification
- Pre-Disbursement Service
- Federal Grant Processing
- Student Loan Management
- Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Monitoring
- Return to Title IV (R2T4) Processing
- Reconciliation
- Quality Assurance/Control
- System Maintenance & Support/New Year Setup