I. Director: Beth Resech

II. ESURC Review Team: Pete Schlosser, Mark Skutley, Susan Thurin

III. Purpose of Review:
Thoughtful, well-planned and systematic review of non-instructional units provide the university with a way to:
- Evaluate whether units are meeting university needs and priorities,
- Assess quality and standards of performance, and
- Encourage further planning to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

IV. Overview:

Organizational structure: The Financial Aid Office includes a director, assistant director, information manager, office manager, three financial aid counselors, two systems processors and 1.5 receptionist positions.

Mission Statement: The Financial Aid Office provides financial resources and information to students pursuing post-secondary education through UW-Stout, which allow them to enroll and to stay enrolled until graduation.

How the unit carries out its mission (mission and goals statement): The goals of the Financial Aid Office are to

1. Provide leadership in the development of policy and procedures relating to student financial aid, in order to expand access, advocate for aid programs and delivery systems that are effective, efficient, and compatible with our Statement of Ethical Principles
2. Work collaboratively with other offices to ensure compliance with aid regulations, and enhance the quality of service to our customers
3. Maintain our position as a center of expertise on financial aid at UW-Stout
4. Evaluate financial aid public policy issues, providing information to policy makers and support collaborative efforts with students to discuss financial aid issues with Congress, the Department of Education, and the state legislature
5. Ensure compliance by continuous monitoring of federal, state and institutional rules and regulations
6. Provide service and award aid in a fair and equitable manner to all
7. Enhance and maximize the financial aid management system to ensure a high level of accuracy and efficiency in its operation, and to provide quality data for decision making purposes
8. Meet all internal, unit, divisional, university, system, state and federal reporting requirements
9. Optimize communication among all staff members and the UW-Stout community
10. Provide and support the Financial Aid Office staff members' participation in training and professional development opportunities, and enhance the professional standards, effectiveness, and accountability of staff performance
11. Promote and support public awareness of the availability of financial aid through outreach and public service
12. Participate in activities provided by the various financial aid associations including the national, regional, and state financial aid associations, and others
13. Be an effective member of and support the goals of Enrollment Services, Academic and Student Affairs and the university

V. Process Followed for the Current Review:
Information reviewed by the ESURC was provided as follows:
- A written self-study.
- A presentation given by Beth Resech, the Director of Financial Aid
- Financial Aid also submitted additional statistical data, a Phone/Front Counter Traffic chart comparing monthly data from 2001 and 2002, and the results of the University of Wisconsin-Stout ACT Student Opinion Survey conducted in May 2002 and August 2001.
- Additional surveys developed by the ESURC Financial Aids Review Team were sent to:
  - 10 surveys were sent to Financial Aid Office staff (4 respondents, 40% response rate)
  - 197 surveys were sent to Financial Aid Office users (34 respondents, 17% response rate) in Admissions, Registration and Records, Graduate Admissions, Foundation Office, Human Resources, Dean of Students, Advisement, Accounting Services, Co-op Office, International Studies Office, Student Support Services, Continuing Education, Multicultural Student Services, Office of Student Business Services, Information and Operating Systems, Athletics, Housing and Residence Life, Chancellor’s Office, Provost’s Office, and eight selected faculty and staff.
- The returned surveys were summarized by the Budget, Planning and Analysis office and examined by the review team.
- The review team also examined the website and additional material provided by the Director of Financial Aid.

VI. Previous Review:
This is the first review of the Financial Aid Office.
VII. Unit Review:

A. Unit Strengths

• The staff are dedicated to providing good customer service which is demonstrated in their competence, professionalism and caring attitude (Self-study; survey of users).
• The unit’s priority is efficient accomplishment of its basic fiscal goals of providing financial aid to students (Self-study, survey).
• Communications within the office are clear and timely (survey).
• Office morale is high (review team consultation, FA presentation, survey)
• Staff has good opportunities for training and development (FA presentation, survey).
• Safety and security for personnel and of information and records (Self-study, survey)
• Office organization is exemplary (review team consultation, Self-study).

B. Opportunities for Unit Enrichment

• The FA website needs to be connected to or have access from e-Portal (FA presentation).
• The FA computer network needs to work with Data-Tel to provide better student access to information (FA presentation).
• The workload and overtime of some staff is burdensome (survey).
• Limited office workspace prevents improving the client waiting room and installing computer terminals for users to access FA information (Self-study, survey).
• A few users question the helpfulness and accessibility of FA counselors (survey of users).

C. Recommendations

• Work with Information and Operating Systems of Telecommunication and Information Services to improve online access to financial aid information for parents and students.
• Assess workload, service level and office space by conducting benchmarking surveys of other Financial Aid Offices within the UW System.
• Develop an electronic “Comment and Suggestion” drop box for users.