Cañada College
Classified Hiring / Position Justification

Hiring Department: Financial Aid Office/Student Services

Position Title: Financial Aid Technician   Classification: C6056

   X   New Position _____ Existing Position _____ Existing Position – Range/Duty Change

Position type: X   permanent   X   full time   12   # of months

_____ part time   _____ % of full time # of months

_____ WCIS   _____ % of full time # of months

Position Allocation: 1.0 FTE general funds   Expiration Date _____

Budget Information:

Exiting employee: Grade _____   Step_____

Monthly pay of exiting employee: $ 4,391 monthly/$52,692 annually

New employee: Grade 26A   Step   1

Justification

Please respond to the following five questions on a separate piece of paper – preferably in Word format so justification can be electronically transmitted for review. Additional information may be provided as relevant for position justification. *Please note, externally funded positions which are __required__ under program/grant eligibility requirements are exempt from this process. These positions will be presented to shared governance bodies as information items only.*

1. If a new position, describe the specific need for the position, if an existing position, reaffirm need in brief statement. (1b) If an existing position with a substantial change in duties, describe what duties have been added or deleted, and why this change is necessary and proposed salary range (may require District approval).

2. Explain how this position aligns with and supports the mission and strategic goals of the college.

3. If applicable, explain how adding this position or changing the duties will strengthen the department.

4. What, if any alternatives to filling the position or changing the duties were considered?

5. If applicable, explain how work will be accomplished if the position is not filled or reallocated.

This position has been reviewed by the department or division and is recommended for hiring.

Margie L. Carrington   November 13, 2013
Dean / Director / Hiring Supervisor   Date

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1. If a new position, describe the specific need for the position, if an existing position, reaffirm need in brief statement.

The Financial Aid Department at Cañada College is seeking permanent funding to hire a new 1.0 FTE Financial Aid Technician to meet the increasing demand of student aid applicants and processing each year, manage a case load of student files and assume responsibility for administering one or more specialized programs. The Department has benefitted from part-time Measure G funded staffing for an hourly Financial Aid Assistant in 2011-12 and 2012-13 and due to increased complexity and higher level staffing needs, a Financial Aid Technician for 13-14. Current part-time staffing averages 20-25 hours per week with additional hours approved during peak periods. Current allocated resources for this position are approximately $19,000. Additional funding needed to bring this fulltime is approximately $33,000.

Increased complexity of administering several federal and state programs over the past few years has improved with process automation and streamlining as a result of implementing changes recommended by a Business Process Analysis (BPA) conducted in 2011-12. However, the BPA also exposed a void in technician level staffing required to balance workload and address the significant need for specialized program oversight, including the Scholarship Program, Cal Grant Program, Direct Loan Program, Return of Title IV, and more recently, addressing the gaps in serving undocumented and documented AB 540 students who are now eligible for state aid programs. Additionally, there continues to be the unmet need for coordination of financial literacy activities

The *2012-13 and 2013-14 Financial Literacy Program Plans* indicate the need for additional technician-level staffing on campus for direct student support and service. Duties of this position include:

- Processing AB 540 Dream Applications for Cal Grant eligibility
- Reviewing, verifying and making corrections on student financial aid applications
- Packaging and awarding grants, loans, federal work-study
- Certifying and processing student loans
- Coordination of Scholarship Program
- Providing follow-up with students, parents, state and federal agencies
- Conducting financial aid and financial literacy presentations for priority registration events, classroom visits and counselor and other student services staff training
- Presenting to high schools and other target constituents
- Training and supervising student assistants and short term employees
- Training other staff on specialized programs, new processes, regulatory changes and procedures
- Participating and/or leading implementation teams (district-wide)

As part of the *2011-12 Outreach and Application Program Plan*, the need for additional financial aid staffing is recognized as a required resource to address the needs of new and returning students in many of our special support populations including first generation, EOPS, Veterans, Former Foster Youth, Displaced Workers, students with disabilities, etc. Filing the FAFSA and Dream Application are promoted as Step 2 of the enrollment process on our website and in our publications and also is a preventative measure for students being dropped for non-

payment. The intended result is that many more students are applying for financial aid and attending workshops offered weekly and for special populations. Changes in state aid eligibility for AB 540 students have necessitated the addition of more workshops, staff participation in specialized trainings and active involvement in task force activities. This added responsibility and increased application processing workload is impacting an already understaffed department.

The following list highlights many of the on-going workshops and presentations the Financial Aid Department conducts or attends as content experts throughout the year:

- College Night – average 40-60 students/parents (annual)
- FAFSA Tuesday – average 10 -12 students (weekly – higher attendance during peak periods before/beginning of term and prior to March 2 Cal Grant deadline)
- Dream Application Wednesday – by appointment – soon to expand to regular workshops once Financial Literacy Lab completed – averages 4-5 students each week.
- Sequoia High School – Spanish and Community College Night (3-4 times per year)
- Classroom/Program Presentations (Middle College, ESL, Reading, NSF scholars, Veterans – several throughout year as faculty request)
- Financial Literacy activities co-sponsored by TRiO/BTO as scheduled
- PEP – average 40-50 students each (three or four time per year April/May)
- SASS, BAGF, other community organizations – attendance varies (once or twice a year)
- Cash for College – average 25-40 students and parents (one currently scheduled on 1/11/2014 – one or two more pending). Includes serving AB 540 students and parents.
- Financial Aid Transfer Workshops (two scheduled in 2012-13, 2013-14 TBD)
- Scholarship Application Workshops (weekly to begin in January in Financial Literacy Lab).

Table 1 illustrates the tripling of FAFSA application volume since 2007 while permanent staffing has remained relatively flat (comparative California Dream Application data is not yet available).

Table 1

Unduplicated FAFSA Applications By Aid Year			
Aid Year	Applications Processed	Increase in Application from Prior Aid Year	
		Numeric	Percentage
2006-2007	1354		
2007-2008	1415	+ 61	4.3%
2008-2009	1700	+ 285	16.8%
2009-2010	2312	+ 612	26.5%
2010-2011	3079	+767	24.9%
2011-2012	3861	+782	20.1%
2012-2013	4313	+452	11.7%

In addition to the increased workload due to student application volume, administrative tasks and technical requirements, financial assistance programs have become increasingly more regulated and require all staff to spend more time participating in District-wide technology meetings and

trainings, both on and off site. As a Direct Lending institution, our college manages our student loan process from application to payment and reconciliation as well as default management efforts to ensure that we do not exceed an official 30% Cohort Default Rate (CDR) each year. Institutions that fail to maintain a CDR below 30% are subject to sanction and are required to implement a Default Management Plan and other institutional oversight and reporting to the Department of Education. There currently is insufficient permanent staffing in the Financial Aid Department to fully address these needs and provide for a robust default management program. Having an additional technician will allow for the Director to spend more time managing these administrative responsibilities.

There has been steady program growth since 2003 when the state increased Board Financial Assistance Program - Student Financial Aid Administration (BFAP-SFAA) funding to increase the number of students receiving state and federal aid in the community colleges. The Financial Aid Department has hired 1.75 FTE permanent staff with these categorical funds since then but has not had an increase in general fund supported staffing for more than 15 years. Table 2 includes MIS reported program data from the 2007-08 aid year through the 2012-13 aid year; of significance is the 25% increase in Board of Governors Fee Waiver recipients and almost 300% increase in Pell Grant recipients during this period when overall enrollments, per MIS data have been relatively flat with exception to a spike in the 2009-10 reporting cycle.

Table 2 illustrates the significant state and federal program growth impacting workload across the Department.

Table 2

		Annual 2007-2008	Annual 2003-2004	Annual 2011-2012	Annual 2011-2012	Growth	Growth
		Student Count	Aid Amount	Student Count	Aid Amount	Student Count	Aid Amount
Cañada Total		3,416	$2,394,107	4,837	$7,877,566	140.39%	229.04%
BOG Fee Waiver		3,397	$791,270	4,770	$1,970,468	40.42%	149.03%
Cal Grant B		80	$91,060	120	$140,566	50.00%	54.37%
Cal Grant C		12	$5,382	14	$5,832	16.67%	8.36%
Pell Grant		534	$1,276,520	1,404	$4,524,434	162.92%	254.44%

Annual Data from: http://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/FinAid_Summary.aspx

2. Explain how this position aligns with and supports the mission and strategic goals of the college.

Mission Statement

Cañada College provides our community with a learning-centered environment, ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve their educational goals by providing transfer, career/technical, and basic skills programs, and lifelong learning, The college cultivates in its students the ability to think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, reason quantitatively to make analytical judgments, and understand and appreciate different points of view within a diverse community.

The position helps to reinforce the College's Mission Statement by virtue that it supports students from varied and diverse backgrounds; specifically in regards to socio-economic status and outreach to our sizeable service-area population of first generation and low-income students. The Financial Aid Technician will be supporting the campus community, a Hispanic Serving Institution, as aligned with the mission to connect with students from diverse backgrounds with resources and opportunities for broadening their financial literacy/understanding which then supports and builds a foundation for their self-efficacy and development of social capital. Academic success is better achieved when students have their basic financial needs met and therefore can afford courses, textbooks, and the general cost of living while devoting their time to academic studies. Financial well-being works hand-in-hand with academic well-being and attainment of certificate, degree and transfer objectives.

This position will help in preparing students develop the critical thinking and analytical skills to properly utilize financial aid resources to achieve their educational goals, understand and take responsibility for the consequences of over-borrowing and failing to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress standards. The addition of a Financial Aid Technician position is in direct response to the evolving financial aid and financial literacy needs of our student population. It is responsive not only to our campus community but also to the current economic climate and the communities we serve.

3. If applicable, explain how adding this position or changing the duties will strengthen the department.

The addition of a 1.0 FTE Financial Aid Technician will strengthen the Financial Aid Department by increasing the number of highly skilled technical staff available to process aid applications in a timely way and manage complex state and federal programs sufficiently. At present, staffing is stretched very thin and program oversight is at risk of not meeting administrative capability as required under federal audit standards and local accreditation standards. This added position will assume responsibility for coordinating the scholarship program which will free-up some of the Director's time needed to monitor, read, review and interpret complex regulatory changes and legislative proposals impacting compliance, budgetary, programmatic and operational requirements for state and federal aid programs.

The Business Process Analysis (BPA) conducted in 2011-12 for all three colleges' Financial Aid Offices provided our offices with process mapping to aid us in streamlining the manual steps for importing FAFSA data (called ISIRs) and running them through an automated process to identify missing or required documents and sending automated notifications and updating Banner self-service (WebSMART). The process allows us to auto package students whose files do not require any additional documentation. This accounts for approximately 40% of our processed files which is a significant improvement. However, as overall volume has increased, so have the number of students selected for verification by the Department of Education which requires Technician level staff to review additional documents and often correct or question conflicting data between the student's aid application and student records. Recent changes in verification include risk analysis based on several factors to identify potential fraud, identity theft and other potential criminal activity. Addressing these cases is time consuming, stressful and is also adding to workload.

If not for the BPA and implementing positive changes as a result of it, staff would be months behind each term in student aid processing. Dream applications are run through a similar automated process; however, the determination and awarding of Cal Grants remains a semi-manual process.

The ongoing automation for each aid-year requires annual system set-up by highly technical level staff members and pulls the Financial Aid Technical Support Specialist away from helping the technicians research and resolve processing errors and helping in peak periods with student file processing and making it difficult to manage the workload with the remaining staff as programs continue to grow or have more complex regulations applied to them.

Multiple regulatory changes including the conversion from the Federal Family Loan Program to Direct Lending in 2010, the elimination of Ability to Benefit provisions in 2012, changes to the Satisfactory Academic Progress appeal approval process in 2011, course repeatability restrictions in 2011, subsidized loan eligibility restriction in 2013 and custom verification changes implemented this year to help identify fraud and abuse are but some of the statutory and regulatory changes that require close monitoring and manual processes to ensure students meet the stricter eligibility requirements and that the College is compliant. Financial Aid staff must spend time daily explaining these changes to students, parents, counselors, and instructors.

As part of the College Costs Appropriation Act of 2012, beginning last year, students who exceed the equivalent of 12 fulltime semesters (6 fulltime years) of federal Pell Grant funding are no longer eligible for federal aid. The impact of this change has resulted in an increasing number of current students losing eligibility for Pell and a corresponding increase in student loan requests to offset loss of grant aid. Counseling students on ways to preserve their remaining grant eligibility is also contributing to increased student volume in the office and general workload as these kinds of discussions require on-on-one time with staff. There is an additional workload burden as a result of the regulatory change because staff must track and monitor students with limited remaining eligibility to prevent over-awarding. An additional Financial Aid Technician is needed to help fulfill the needs in both serving students and maintaining ever changing compliance with state and federal legislative and regulatory changes.

4. What, if any alternatives to filling the position or changing the duties were considered?

Because of complex technical, regulatory and compliance issues and statutory requirements associated with administering state and federal aid programs, much of the workload that falls on each Financial Aid Technician and the Director cannot be delegated to staff in less technical positions. An additional technical permanent staff position is required to address processing of specialized programs and packaging and awarding student aid. These tasks cannot be delegated to student assistants or an assistant level staff member due to both job classification issues and the expertise and technical knowledge required.

During the 2012-13 fiscal year, financial aid staff logged approximately 150 hours of paid overtime. For the prior year, they logged approximately 300 hours. The drop in overtime can be attributed to BPA automation. Looking forward, the hiring of a technician-level hourly staff member through Measure G for 2013-14 should also curtail some of our overtime needs due to this position being able to perform higher level work than in previous years. The BPA highlights and justifies the need for staff to work overtime during peak periods and during system upgrades and the annual "new year" set-up. Some of the work required is not getting done as regularly as it should due to processing changes. Staffing needs include year-round attention to the scholarship program, providing default aversion outreach and communication, staying current on Return of Title IV processing, and other program management issues. Staff tend to keep internal comp time as a result of needing to catch-up periodically on their programs.

A staffing comparison below in Table 3 shows the level of staffing at all three college's financial aid offices. Not included is the current part time hourly Financial Aid Technician at Cañada or any part-time staffing at the other two colleges.

Table 3

Position	Cañada FTE	CSM FTE	Skyline FTE
Director	1.0	1.0	1.0
Financial Aid Technical Support Specialist	1.0	-	1.0
Program Services Coordinator (FA Outreach)	-	-	1.0
Technician	2.7	4.0	3.0
Counselor	-	-	.50
Financial Aid Assistant	-	1.0	1.0
Total	4.7	6.0	7.5

The above staffing comparison is not to imply that the other two campuses are adequately staffed. Based on the NASFAA Staffing Model, all of our offices are understaffed. However, as better-resourced colleges, they have support in other areas that may lessen some of the workload issues on their financial aid departments such as dedicated counselors and appointment slots, outreach staff and student-staffed computer labs that provides more access for students to trained support staff and services.

Staff training and professional development are especially important and timely for financial aid professionals. Staff are required to participate in a variety of workshops, trainings, webinars and conferences throughout the year to stay current on policy and processing changes, regulations and other mandates from many agencies including the Department of Education, the California Student Aid Commission, the SMCCCD, the California Community College Chancellors Office, the Department of Veterans Affairs, etc. oftentimes offered by the agencies themselves or through partnerships with professional associations including the California Community Colleges Student Financial Aid Administrators Association (CCCSFAAA), the California Association of Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA) and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) as well as software/financial aid management system trainings (3CBG/Ellucian Live). Since not all staff can attend all trainings, it is important those that do bring back critical information to share and then in turn, train other staff on new processes, procedures and resources. Having another Financial Aid Technician responsible for not only attending but training others also helps balance workload and also provides more "go to" experts in the office.

5. If applicable, explain how work will be accomplished if the position is not filled or reallocated.

As indicated in the response to question four, there is not an alternative to filling the position. The position must be filled in some capacity which may include any or all of the following:

- Regular staff work significant overtime as needed to stay as current as possible in processing students aid files and addressing specialized program management and compliance requirements.

- A short-term fulltime Financial Aid Technician is approved for a year while alternative long term staffing needs are reconsidered.

- Reduce "open" hours to students so staff have additional time for processing and training demands (possible full Friday closure plus a half day on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings for example).

The Cañada College Financial Aid Department has experienced substantial growth since 2003 while staffing has remained relatively flat. Program growth alone cannot be sustained with the current level of staffing. The status quo is not sustainable over time. Staff should not be expected to continually work overtime nor the Director to work 60-hour weeks to meet the demands of the Department. We believe the need to hire a fulltime Financial Aid Technician is fully justified.