A History of the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid

Slogan: “Striving to provide the Right Funds to the Right Student at the Right Time through Truth and Service”

The Financial Aid Office at North Carolina Central University was established in 1963 to more effectively coordinate and administer aid programs. Mr. Reuben Wallace Cooper Blackwell served as the First Director of Financial Aid. He was also the co-founder and president of the North Carolina Association of Financial Aid Administrators (NCAFAA). In 1963 the Financial Aid Office reported to the Student Affairs Office. In 1985, Lola McKnight served as the Interim Financial Aid Director. From 1986 to 1995 she served as the Financial Aid Director. The Financial Aid Office reported to Financial Affairs. From 1995-96 James Tyson served as interim Director of Scholarships and Student Aid and Scholarship and Student Aid which reported to Student Affairs from this point forward. From 1996 to Feb. 2009 Sharon J. Oliver served as the Director of Scholarships and Student Aid. Mrs. Oliver currently holds two positions; she is the Associate Vice-Chancellor for Enrollment Management and the interim Director of Financial Aid.

The programs available at that time were the National Defense Student Loan program which became known as the National Direct Student Loan and today is known as the Federal Perkins Loan Program. There has been an evolution in financial aid programs and several name changes throughout the years. The university has always participated in work study and a variety of private scholarship programs. Another program with a name change was the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG) which today is known as the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG).

In 1995, the Financial Aid Office was selected to participate in the William D. Ford Federal Direct Student Loan program. The University began participation in the program during the its second year. This program allows the institution to receive funds directly from the Federal Government to lend to students rather than through private lenders. Prior to the William D. Ford Loan Program, the Financial Aid Office participated in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). The Federal Pell grant program was introduced in 1973. The average Pell Grant award was $270. Today, the average Pell Grant award is $3,611. In addition to the William D. Ford Loan Program, NCCU’s Office of Scholarships and Student Aid participates in the following programs: EARN, SMART, ACG, TEACH Grant, State and Need Based grants.

Due to new programs and the growth of existing programs, the Financial Aid office was renamed the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid. The OSSA has more than doubled the number of full-time permanent staff. The Financial Aid Office was housed on the First Floor of the Old Senior Dorm with the Federal Loans Office in the basement and Residential Life on the Second Floor. The Old Senior Dorm has been demolished and replaced with the newly renovated Pearson Cafeteria. In 2007, the Old Senior Dorm was demolished and replaced with the newly renovated Pearson Cafeteria. Having to move once again, the Scholarships and Student Aid Office is currently housed on the First Floor of the Student Services Building, formerly the Old Women’s Gym.

The mission statement of the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid (OSSA) is to assist in the recruitment and retention of students by providing financial resource information and access to funding. Financial assistance and guidance will be provided through appropriate communication and learning activities that will empower students to fulfill their academic aspirations. As members of the University community, the OSSA will collaborate with other campus departments and the community through partnerships to provide outreach and access services, scholarship resources and educational work experiences to students. The OSSA is committed to providing exemplary service to students, families, staff, and faculty and community members. This past year, the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid successfully delivered over $100 million in Financial Aid to 7,776 students.

The goals of The Office of Scholarships and Student Aid are:

1. To increase awareness of financial aid grant opportunities.
2. To inform students of grants and scholarships available for specific majors in order to minimize student borrowing.
3. To utilize advanced technology to improve services to students.
4. To maintain complete regulatory compliance.
5. To assist with recruitment and retention of students.
**Outstanding Alumni:**
Reuben Wallace Cooper Blackwell
Lola McKnight
Lillian W. Downey

Prepared by Ms. Cynthia Grant
Sources: Department Records
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