

CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®

Case Study

“We wanted a method to redistribute the financial aid funds available and direct them to the most deserving students. For us, it was not about **saving** money but about spending money as **fairly** as possible.”

—Pam Fowler,

Financial Aid Director, University of Michigan



Consistency and Equity: A Public Flagship Institution Implements CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®

When the **University of Michigan** decided to improve its approach to awarding need-based grant aid, the institution turned to the College Board's CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®. Although the University of Michigan was already using a “modified” version of Institutional Methodology using the FAFSA and tax return data, financial aid director Pam Fowler was concerned about the lack of consistency in the resulting aid awards. “The CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE provided a more equitable file review and aid application process. By implementing the PROFILE, I know that each student is being treated the same way and the IM principles are applied consistently from case to case.”



Solutions Deployed:

CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®

Enrollment Planning Service (EPS®)

Descriptor PLUS

Student Search Service® (SSS®)

Solution Summary

Institution

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Challenges

- Consistency in aid awards
- A better way to re-distribute their institutional grant dollars

Benefits

- Substantially increased gift award packages to eligible students
- Increased gift aid without an equivalent increase in tuition
- Better application data
- Better direction of resources to families that need the funds
- Vastly improved packaging policy for low-income filers

The Service

Although consistency was one of the crucial benefits to the University in adopting the PROFILE, the institution was also seeking a better way to redistribute their institutional grant dollars. In fact, by adopting the PROFILE, the Noncustodial PROFILE (NCP), and using IM to award their private funds, Michigan was able to substantially increase their gift aid packages to all eligible students. “During the first year of using the PROFILE and NCP services, we were actually able to increase Michigan gift aid per student. And we accomplished this without an equivalent increase in tuition. The gift aid increases were mostly the result of the redistribution of grant aid based on better application data. By being able to redirect our funding, we were able to revise our aid guidelines—more students were actually eligible for grant aid and in greater amounts than in prior years,” Fowler explained.

It is clear from the first-year results that the PROFILE and NCP services successfully helped the University with its plan to redistribute its private grant funds. Almost \$5 million in need-based aid was redirected to eligible students in 2006–07, and much of this was the result of using the PROFILE data. However, one of the most significant improvements to Michigan’s aid policy was the elimination of the loans for the lowest income filers. “Not only were we more effective at directing our resources to the families that needed the funds, but our packaging policy for low-income filers are vastly improved,” Fowler said.

The Benefits

One might expect that a change in financial aid requirements and packaging guidelines would result in a change in staffing and office process, but the University did not experience this. “The change in our process that resulted from using PROFILE was not a problem for us. File review time may have taken a bit longer, but in many ways, staff was not impacted by the transition,” noted Fowler. In addition, the office had anticipated a large demand for PROFILE fee waivers. “In fact, we only used nine during the entire award cycle. The automated fee-waiver process that is part of the PROFILE application was very effective at identifying the families that should not have to pay the fee.”

Fowler credits the College Board on-site training for much of this smooth transition. College Board financial aid services staff visited the campus twice, providing an extensive overview of PROFILE and most importantly, the opportunity to do “good, old-fashioned hand computations of IM cases,” reported Fowler. “This training was a big help in preparing the staff.”

In addition to the College Board training, Fowler recommends that other public institutions preparing to use PROFILE visit other campus aid offices that utilize the same financial aid software system. “Colleagues can be the best source of information as you implement PROFILE,” she said.

Planning, training, and preparation were all crucial factors in the University’s successful first year of PROFILE service. Also critical to their successful first-year transition was the “buy-in factor” from other campus administrators. “Everyone needs to understand the reasons for using PROFILE, emphasized Fowler. This includes the admissions office, the enrollment team, the student services teams, and especially, the campus leadership. Even our president was fully informed and committed to the decision.”

The Conclusion

Based on the success of their experience, with PROFILE, Fowler recommends that other public institutions consider using the service to award their private aid funds. “With PROFILE you get better data and an improved approach to need analysis. Now I know the consistency is there.”





About CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE

No one has more experience with admission and financial aid than the College Board. Our PROFILE application gives you the information you need to make sensitive and competitive financial aid decisions and accommodate questions that are unique to your institution. We can even allow you to adjust the need analysis formula to award institutional aid. The PROFILE provides a complete picture of the financial strength of a student's family and is the only service that includes full calculations of both the Institutional and estimated Federal Methodologies. When we send you the PROFILE information, we also send a PROFILE Acknowledgment to applicants confirming their information has been sent to specific colleges.

About the College Board

The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,200 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

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