
University Administrator Interview

Institution:
Cluster:
Interviewed:
Interviewed by:
Date:

OMB Approval No.: 0000-0000
Expires: 00/00/0000

FSA MSURSD MSI Support
Performance Enhancement Program – Phase II
Administrator Interview

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING TO RESPONDENTS

Introductory Script for Administrator Interview: Good morning/afternoon. First of all, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me and for being willing to participate in this study for the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA). Before we start, I would like to introduce myself, provide a little background on the study, and answer any questions you might have.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

My name is name and I am a researcher with Windwalker Corporation, an organization that conducts research in education. I am here today to facilitate this interview on behalf of FSA’s Minority Serving and Under Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD). As independent, federally contracted evaluators of MSURSD, Windwalker is looking to discover ways that MSURSD can best serve minority serving institutions MSIs. This is not an evaluation or review of your institution; it is a time for us to hear from you about the resources and services that MSURSD can provide for you. The information we discuss will be essential to ensuring MSIs continue their participation in Title IV programs.

MSURSD is currently working to improve its interactions with MSIs by enhancing the services and resources MSURSD provides, with dual goals of increasing MSI compliance rates with Title IV regulations and assisting MSIs in improving student performance outcomes.

The purpose of this interview is to provide an in-depth exploration of specific research topics and questions, to provide MSURSD with feedback on how to further improve its interactions with MSIs. We will be exploring the following topics:

1. The Impacts of Financial Aid Staff Turnover;
2. The Use of Technology to Track Student Financial Aid Activity;
3. Student Financial Aid Awareness & Engagement; and
4. MSURSD Services for Recently Designated MSIs.

Your institution has been selected to participate in this interview because of its cluster affiliation (name of cluster (e.g. HBCU, HSI) and regional location. Along with the other selected institutions, you represent the full MSI population. This interview should take approximately 45 minutes.

I'll talk about how this interview will go next, but for now, are there any questions about the study or why we are here?

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW PROCEDURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Next, I'd like to say a few things about the process for this discussion. During our interview today, I'll be asking you some questions and I'll be taking notes on what you are saying. I will not record your name. If you don't mind, I would also like to record our conversation simply for note-taking purposes. No one outside of our research team would hear the recording; it would just be for my own reference. If you would like me to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be OK?

I want to assure you that all of the information you provide today will only be used for the purposes of this study. The recorded focus group will be transcribed by me, and portions of this discussion may be incorporated into the final report to the Department of Education but will not associate responses with a specific individual and I will not provide information that identifies a subject to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law. Therefore, anyone who reads the study will not know that the statements came from a specific individual. The results of this study will be used by FSA only to further improve upon its interactions with minority serving institutions. Whatever you express in this room stays in this room. We're asking you to make the same commitment - to keep what is said in this room private and not repeat it to others in your school. That way people can feel safe to be honest, and in turn, we will gain more helpful information to improve the financial aid process at your school. Agreed?

This interview will give you a chance to express your opinions. I want you to feel comfortable in saying what you really think and feel, as your ideas and opinions are important to me. If you don't feel like responding to a question, you don't have to.

Are there any questions before we get started?

If you agree to the terms mentioned I will accept your verbal consent to participate and proceed with this interview.

Note to interviewer:

Throughout the interview, possible probes are set aside following each general question. Asking

*these questions may help to move the interview pace or may prompt a less talkative respondent. However, **do not feel you need to ask each of these probes**; it is likely that the respondent will cover many of these issues when responding to your initial inquiry. Keep the tone conversational and comfortable.*

I would like to start by learning about you and your role.

1. What is your role and how long have you been working at this school?
 - 1a. Have you always worked in an administrative office at a higher education institution?
If not, where else have you worked and for how long?
2. Have you ever had a role in financial aid? If so, what role did you have and for how long?

Thank you for providing me with some information about your background. Now I would like to begin discussing your familiarity with the financial aid office at this institution.

3. How involved are you with the day-to-day operations of the financial aid office?
What to listen for and probe, if necessary:
 - o How do you engage with the financial aid staff?*
 - o What is your role in overseeing the office operations?*
4. How familiar are you with any challenges faced by the financial aid staff in performing their responsibilities?
What to listen for and probe, if necessary:
 - o What are some of the challenges you are aware of?*
5. What is your role in addressing any challenges faced by the financial aid office?
6. Do you believe that staff turnover is problematic for the financial aid office?
If yes:
 - 6a. What are the reasons for financial aid staff turnover?
What to listen for and probe, if necessary:
 - o Do professional development opportunities affect staff turnover? If so, how?*
 - o Do human resources policies affect staff turnover? If so, how?*
 - 6b. How do you address the challenge of financial aid staff turnover? Who else, if anyone, is involved in this addressing this challenge?
 - 6c. What resources would help you to better address staff turnover?

If not:

6d. What do you think contributes to staff staying in the financial aid office?

7. What do you think contributes to financial aid staff retention?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

Do professional development opportunities contribute to staff retention? If so, how?

Do human resources policies contribute to staff retention? If so, how?

Now I'd like to start talking about your institution's use of technology to track student financial aid activity.

8. How does your institution make decisions about the use of technological systems and software packages?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

Who makes these decisions?

What is the process for selecting and approving the technology?

9. How have FSA regulations necessitated changes to your technological systems or software packages since you've been at the institution?

If yes:

9a. What was done to ensure the changes were implemented effectively and timely?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

Was the new system/software tested? If so, how and what offices were involved?

Was training provided for the users? If so, how and by whom?

9b. Were there any challenges with instituting the changes?

If yes:

9c. What were they?

9d. How were they addressed?

Now I'd like to start talking about student financial aid awareness and engagement.

10. Does your institution assess your students' financial aid knowledge?

If yes:

10a. How do you assess this?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- Do you assess student knowledge about the cost of college? If so, how?
- Do you assess student knowledge about how to access financial aid? If so, how?

11. Are there any barriers to student engagement in financial aid awareness?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- What are those barriers?

- How do you address the barriers?

Ask Questions 12-13 only of recently designated MSIs (refer to list). Otherwise, skip to Question 14.

Now I'd like to start talking about MSURSD Services for recently designated MSIs.

12. Were you aware of MSURSD prior to being asked to participate in this interview?

If yes:

12a. Which MSURSD resources are you aware of?

12b. Which MSURSD resources do you believe are particularly useful?

13. As a newly designated MSI, what resources do you believe your financial aid office needs?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- What are the needs regarding Title IV compliance?
- What are the needs regarding student engagement in financial aid awareness?
- What resources could help in raising graduation and retention rates?

14. Do you have anything else that you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

Those are all the questions I have. Thank you for your time and for participating in this study.