
Director Interview Protocol

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

FSA MSURSD MSI Support
TASK 2.3D: Development of an Industry Benchmark Report
Director Interview

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING TO RESPONDENTS

Introductory Script for Director Interview: Good morning/afternoon. First of all, thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me and for being willing to participate in this study for the U.S. Department of Education. Before we start, I would like to introduce myself, provide a little background on my work, and answer any questions you might have.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

My name is name and I am a researcher from Windwalker Corporation, an organization that conducts research in education. I am here today to interview you as part of an effort to provide the Office of Federal Student Aid with information about the processes and programs implemented by your office.

Your institution has been identified as having exemplary compliance rates and/or student performance metrics, and we would like to understand the practices your office employs that contribute to your institution's outstanding performance. Once we identify the best practices used by your office, we will communicate them to other financial aid offices so they can learn from your example.

I'll be asking you questions that require you to identify which policies and programs you believe assist in your exemplary performance, as well as to describe these policies and programs in great detail. Additionally, I would be interested in obtaining any artifacts, such as program descriptions, process models, and resources that you provide to your students or anything else that you have that pertain to the policies and programs that we discuss so that we can share them with other institutions that are interested in learning from your practices.

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

DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW PROCEDURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Next, I'd like to say a few things about the process for this discussion. During our session today, I'll be asking you some questions and I will 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 so that I accurately record what you are saying. If you would like me to turn off the recorder at any point, just let me know. Would that be OK?

The recorded interview will be transcribed by me, and portions of this interview will be incorporated into the final report to the Department of Education which describes the practices that institutions with exemplary performance employ. While your identity will remain confidential, some people within the Department of Education, specifically those affiliated with Federal Student Aid's Minority and Under Resourced Schools Division, will know that you were the one that provided us with information, since they are the ones who know which institutions we were contacting and were the ones who decided to interview Financial Aid and Institutional Effectiveness Directors to participate in this research. I will not use your name or attribute any quotes to you in the report, therefore, anyone who reads the study will not know that the statements came from you. As I mentioned earlier, the results of this study will be used by FSA to share with other institutions so that they can use your best practices within their institution.

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. How long have you been working at this institution?
2. During your tenure at this institution, have you always been financial aid/institutional effectiveness director?

If respondent replies "no", ask the following:

- o What other role(s) have you had? How long were you in each?
3. Have you had a role in financial aid office at another school? If so, what role did you have and for how long?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- o *How long have you been working in the financial aid industry?*

Thank you for providing me with some information about your background. Now I would like to talk about what your institution is doing that contributes to your top performance. Specifically,

your institution has demonstrated exemplary compliance rates and/or student performance metrics, and I'm interested in learning what initiatives, processes, programs, etc. that your office implements or participates in that may contribute to such a high level of performance.

4. What initiatives, processes or programs that your office is engaged in do you think contribute to your success?

If there are multiple that they think contribute to their success, ask questions 5-10 for each initiative.

5. How does this contribute to your high compliance rates and/or student performance metrics?
6. How was this initiative developed?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- Who participated in its development?*
- Who initiated its development?*

If the Office of Financial Aid was involved in the development, ask questions 7 through 10:

7. What resources were you provided in order to develop the initiative?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- Did you create or utilize any resources yourself, and what were they?*

8. Were there other resources that you would have liked to have been given?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- Specific resources they would like to receive*
- Who should provide these resources?*

9. What challenges did you encounter when developing it?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- Who was responsible for/caused the challenge?*

10. How were these challenges overcome?

Now that I have an understanding of how this/these were developed, at this point I would like to get a better sense of how it/they are implemented.

Ask questions 11 – 17 for each initiative that is seen as contributing to their success.

11. Who participates in the implementation of this initiative?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- What role does each participant play?*

- o *Who leads the initiative?*
- o *Who benefits from it?*

12. What is Financial Aid's role in its implementation?

13. What resources are you provided to participate in the initiative? Who provides them?

14. Are there other resources that you would like to be provided?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- o *Specific resources they would like to receive*
- o *Who should provide these resources?*

15. To what extent was senior leadership involved with the initiative?

What to listen for and probe, if necessary:

- o *Were they involved in its development? How?*
- o *Are they involved in its ongoing implementation? How?*

16. What challenges do you experience when implementing this initiative?

17. How do you overcome these challenges?

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

19. Are there any artifacts, such as program descriptions, or resources that you provide that you think other institutions would benefit from reviewing as part of this report?

If yes,

- o Would you mind if we share this information with other institutions?

If no,

- o How can I obtain them to share with other institutions?

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