

2-1-1973

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Anthony J. Bellia

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Recommended Citation

Bellia, Anthony J. (1973) "Computerized Student Financial Aid Reporting: How it works at a small Private College," *Journal of Student Financial Aid*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/jsfa/vol3/iss1/5>

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COMPUTERIZED STUDENT FINANCIAL AID REPORTING: HOW IT WORKS AT A SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGE

Anthony J. Bellia

In this time of reporting and accountability, a systematic method of collecting student financial aid data is becoming a major concern of student financial aid administrators. Many are aware that large universities have developed sophisticated methods to collect data, to compute package awards, and to provide for computer-type award letters. The purpose of this report is to share my experiences with computer-collection data at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, which has an undergraduate enrollment of 2500 students, 950 of whom receive student financial aid administered and controlled by the College.

This report will consist of the following categories: desirable office services, methodology, student aid to be computerized, reports derived from a computer-based program, and recommendations.



Anthony Bellia is Director of Student Financial Aids at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York. Prior to that, he served as the Associate Director of Financial Aids at the State University College at Buffalo.

DESIRABLE OFFICE SERVICES

The financial aid office requested assistance from the computer center for the following functions.

1. To assist in compiling annual federal operation reports.
2. To provide monthly, semester, and annual reports for institutional, federal, and college-administered private scholarship student aid.
3. To provide a cumulative financial aid record for a student during his undergraduate studies.
4. To provide an analysis of student aid recipients according to class year, academic division, sex, race, family gross income categories, veteran status, independent status, resident status, and awards received.
5. To assist in analyzing student aid patterns for the above categories.
6. To assist in studying attrition patterns for the class years.
7. To provide for the printing of the student financial aid award on the student bill, and to indicate the balance due.

METHODOLOGY

In order for the computer center to provide the services that the financial aid office needed, a computer information input card was devised. It included the following data.

1. Social Security number.
2. Student name.
3. Complete address.
4. Division, class year, sex, marital status.
5. Gross family income according to the U. S. Office of Education categories.
6. Independent student.
7. Transfer student.
8. Funding agency — Code number.
9. Dollar amount of the aid.
10. If the dollar amount is not needed, it is possible to indicate these categories:
 - a. full tuition covered.
 - b. all fees paid.
 - c. dormitory charges paid-in-full.
11. Race — according to the U. S. Office of Education breakdown.
12. Semester; month and year.

Refer to the sample input card below showing how the above information was incorporated by the financial aid office to be transmitted to the computer center.

CHART A

123456789

SEMESTER _____
MO YR

SAMPLE, JOHN H
216 Person St
Buffalo NY 14212

COMMENTS:

DIV-YR SEX MARST
D 75 M S

GROSS FAMILY INCOME:

Circle one.

1. 0 - 05,999
2. 6,000 - 08,999
3. 9,000 - 11,999
4. OVER 12,000

RACE: Circle one.

1. Negro-Black
2. American Indian
3. Oriental-American
4. Spanish-Surname-American
5. White
6. Other

If \$ amount is to be ignored,
check appropriate category
(s) below.

- FULL TUITION COVERED
- ALL FEES PAID
- DORMITORY CHARGES PAID IN FULL

INDEPENDENT STUDENT YES NO

TRANSFER STUDENT YES NO

FUNDING AGENCY _____

AMOUNT _____

The completion of the yearly input card can be simplified by having the computer center provide gum labels with items 1 to 4 printed on them.

Item No. 8, the funding agency, is the key to the accuracy of this procedure. An alphabetical code system, as illustrated below, can be implemented. Within each alphabetical code, additions can be incorporated by adding more numbers. This system provides for an indefinite number of additions within each code. Refer to Chart B for a sample coding system.

CHART B
STUDENT FINANCIAL AID CODING

- Code A Oishei-Trico Scholarship, less state awards.
- B Athletic Grant-in-aid, less state awards.
- C *Canisius College*
- CO1 Canisius College
- CO2 Griffin Grant
- CO3 Academic Incentive Award
- CO4 Martin Luther King Program
- D *Private Scholarship*
- DO1 Chase Manhattan
- DO2 W. T. Grant
- DO3 Carborundum
- DO4 Buffalo Negro Scholarship
- E Higher Education Opportunity Program
- F Cooperative College Center
- G R.O.T.C.
- P National Direct Student Loan
- Q *Supplemental Opportunity Grant Program*
- QO1 E.O.G. Initial
- QO2 E.O.G. 1st Renewal
- QO3 E.O.G. 2nd Renewal

- QO4 E.O.G. 3rd Renewal
- R College Work-Study Program
- S N. Y. State Awards
- SO1 Regents Scholarship
- SO2 Scholar Incentive Award
- T Law Enforcement Education Program
- TO1 Grant
- TO2 Loan

The actual name of the award can be abbreviated when it is printed on the student's bill.

The code number followed by the name of the scholarship is printed on our reports. The name of the scholarship is also printed on the student's bill so that the student can confirm the actual name of the award and the dollar value. A computer input card has to be completed for each type of student financial assistance.

Revisions and updating of student financial aid is done periodically. After the initial report, this office notifies the computer center of new awards, revisions of awards, and awards to be deleted. The updating procedure must be properly administered because of the nature of financial aid administration. Student awards, as you know, are computed initially but are revised according to the changes in the student need and the dollars available for revision.

The timetable for revisions given to the computer will depend on your institution timetable for updating reports. Refer to Chart C for a sample revision form and to see how the above information was incorporated. This revision form is printed on quadruple carbon N.C.R. paper. This particular method provides for updating student records on the part of the computer center and the treasurer's office. Furthermore, it also provides for a master revision file for the financial aid office, and the fourth copy is placed in the student's folder.

TO: Computer Center
 FROM: Financial Aid Office
 SUBJECT: Student Financial Aid

DATE

PART I

INITIAL AWARD Computer Card Enclosed

NameSS #

AwardCode Amt.

PART II

REVISED AWARD

NameSS #

Delete AwardCode Amt.

New AwardCode Amt.

PART III

NEW COMPUTER CODING

AddCode

Computer - white copy Student - gold copy
 Treasurer - yellow copy Fin. Aid - pink copy

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID TO BE COMPUTERIZED

This office decided to use the services of the computer center basically to provide a systematic method of storing data and consequently, to use this information for analytical purposes. The only student financial aid programs that this office wanted computerized were those that are directly controlled and administered by the student financial aid office. The obvious programs that can be computerized are all federal student aid programs, institutional scholarships and grants, and private scholarships controlled by the college. The programs that were not included because of the disbursement of funds procedure were: guaranteed student loans, state scholarships and grants, and scholarships paid directly to the student. Any funds payable directly to the student were not included for the following reason. When the student receives his tuition bill, the college will only give credit for student aid which the Business Office or Financial Aid Office will receive directly from the appropriate funding agency.

For statistical purposes, at the end of the semester, the printout for students who received guaranteed student loans (provided by the various state agencies) can be included. This will provide data to analyze students who are borrowing from more than one loan fund, whether or not they are resident students — to cite just a few possible examples. If your respective states provide computer printouts or computer punch cards for students receiving state scholarships or grants, this aid also can be computerized on a semester basis for statistical purposes.

In the college work-study program, data is given to the computer center three times a year: at the end of the summer program, at the completion of the fall semester, and at the close of the fiscal year for the spring and summer work-study program. For many purposes, this is an appropriate time interval but it is possible to submit the data at the end of each work-study pay period.

REPORTS DERIVED FROM A COMPUTER-BASED PROGRAM

Succinctly, all of the functions that this office wanted the computer center to provide have been fulfilled. The data provided by the computer center will allow a financial aid office to perform a systematic study of the following.

1. Attrition of student aid recipients according to class year and diversion.
vision.
2. A tool to assist in the projection of funds needed for various class years next year.
3. In future years, once the program has been established, it will provide a statistical base for student aid proposals for both institutional and federal funds.
4. Detailed report to the admissions office on the number of freshmen receiving aid and the dollar amounts awarded.

There are other areas in which a computer-based student aid program can assist financial aid offices.

1. The actual financial aid package is printed on the student's bill and this will help both student and parent in understanding how much the student is receiving and the balance that the family will have to raise.
2. Naturally, the program will assist the financial aid office in completing both federal reports and institutional requests for data.
3. An office may also consider the incorporating of students who were eligible for aid but who were denied assistance due to the lack of funds. This data will assist a financial aid office in completing both federal fiscal operations report and proposals for funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If a small college does not have a computer center, the college might want to investigate the cost of renting computer time from a nearby institution that does have a computer center.
2. It would seem feasible that if a college has a computer program established for federal student aid programs, it could be shared by other colleges within a regional district in order to reduce the duplication of efforts as well as cost.

It is becoming more apparent each year that the role of the financial aid director is an important one — an influential force at institutions of higher education.

The better we understand our own operations, the better we will be able to benefit our individual institutions.

This report is a survey showing how the Financial Aid Office at Canisius College has incorporated the services of our computer center. This analysis does not attempt to provide all the answers. It is presented as information for financial aid officers who have not used a computer center and who have not had the time to investigate in detail how the services of a computer center can assist them.