

2018-2019
UNIVERSITY SENATE ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Name: *University Scholarship Committee*

Number of Meetings Held this Year: 3

Committee Chair: Jennifer Espinosa

Committee Members: (list here)

Melanie Alverio	Douglas Mann	
Aimee Burgin	DeLithea Davis	
Heather Dolbow		
Shirley Farrar		
Bethany Gummo		
Laurie Haines		
Daniel Kipnis		
Michelle Kowalsky		

Purpose of/Charge to Committee:

The University Scholarship Committee (USC) is responsible for reviewing the scholarship application process for University-awarded scholarships and generating criteria to evaluate student applications. After thoroughly reviewing the submitted applications, the committee selects recipients for University-awarded scholarships based on the specific requirements for each scholarship, such as academic achievement, financial need, and involvement with the university community.

Summary of Activities this Year:

- September 2018: USC members elected the committee chair
- December 5th, 2018: The USC met for the first time and discussed the criteria used to evaluate student applications. We identified many issues with how the criteria had been operationalized in previous years, so we collaborated on solutions to improve the criteria.
 - We improved the criteria for evaluating student essays by separating points awarded for the content of the essay from points awarded for the grammatical quality of the essay.
 - We extended the GPA criteria to 2 decimal points so reviewers can more accurately award points for GPA.
 - We revised the criteria for extra-curricular activities and college activities to better

differentiate the levels of points.

- We revised the criteria for letters of recommendation to identify how many letter students obtained. Many University-awarded scholarships do not require letters of recommendation, so we scored based upon how many were obtained, and then went back to evaluate the content of the letters as we were selecting the recipient(s) for scholarships requiring letters of recommendation.
- January 2019 – March 2019: USC members reviewed scholarship applications, and scored the application according to the criteria agreed upon at our December meeting. 100% of applications were reviewed by committee members prior to our first deliberation meeting.
- March 29th and April 5th, 2019: USC members met to evaluate the applicants for each scholarship, and selected the recipients. The committee evaluated 91 scholarships, and selected recipients for 90 scholarships. Unfortunately, we were unable to award the Charles & Joyce Moore for Urban Excellence Scholarship because there were no applicants that met the criteria of having a “significant break” in their educational pursuits.

2018-2019 COMMITTEE SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

SUGGESTIONS:

1. As the software system students use to apply for scholarships is changing in AY 2019-20, the USC has several suggestions on improvements that are needed to the elements of the student application and/or software:
 - a. The software system needs a better search function, that will allow the USC to search a student's name during our deliberation meetings to see what scholarships they have applied for.
 - b. The student application needs to have clearer criteria on the Essay students write. In AY 2018-19, the Essay component was originally marked as "optional" in Awardspring. The USC identified this problem at our first meeting, but it is unclear how many students had already completed their applications at this point and opted not to complete the Essay.
 - i. There also needs to be a clearer definition of what the Essay on the application should look like in terms of the number of paragraphs, substance, etc.
 - c. A few scholarships require an applicant to be a "non-traditional" student. Clearer definitions are needed of a "non-traditional" student on the student application. Many applicants identified themselves as "non-traditional" because they work full-time and go to school at the same time.
 - d. The extra-curricular and college-activities component either needs clearer definitions or to be combined into one field on the student application, where students list all of their activities in one spot. Students are unclear on which types of activities are considered "extra-curricular" and "college-activities," which makes reviewing the applications difficult for USC members.
 - e. Scholarships requiring a specific class-standing should specify whether the required class standing is for when students complete their application, or if that class standing is required for the following AY when they would receive the scholarship.
 - f. The software system should separate dependent applicants out completely or clearly identify them to assist the USC during deliberations.
 - g. The software system should auto-populate fields of information from the student application relevant to each specific scholarship.

- h. For scholarships with multiple criteria, it would be helpful for the donors to express the importance of each criteria. Some donors do this already by specifying first preference, second preference, etc.
 - i. Before the USC meets to award University-awarded scholarships, all dependent student and merit-based scholarships should be identified in the system. This will prevent the USC from awarding scholarships to students who have already received funding from other sources, and enable more students to benefit for the University-awarded scholarships.
2. A list of scholarships by monetary value is needed. The USC should award scholarships by decreasing monetary value, to avoid over-awarding scholarships to individual students. The USC has been informed, that in some cases, applicants end up receiving too much aid between merit-based, dependent, department and University-awarded aid, so some scholarships end up being awarded to a recipient other than who the USC selected. In these cases, the USC should be given the opportunity to re-review the scholarships to select a new recipient.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. It is recommended that as many of the AY 2018-19 committee members be assigned to the USC for AY 2019-20 as possible. Financial Aid is transitioning to a new software system for University-awarded scholarships in AY 2019-20, so returning several committee members knowledgeable of the USC processes will help the committee run smoothly and allow members to focus on learning the new software system.
2. It is recommended that the USC continue to include a member from the College of Education to assist with awarding the education-based scholarships.
3. It is recommended that the application period for students to apply for University-awarded scholarships close on January 15th. The close of applications for AY 2018-19 was originally on 12/23/18. This deadline was four days after the end of the semester and fell close to the Christmas holiday, so many students may not have been able to complete their applications before the deadline. The deadline was extended to 1/1/19 after discussion at the USC's first meeting, however, it is unclear how many students knew about the extension. Committee members do not typically start reviewing applications until the start of the Spring semester, so it would be fine from the committee's standpoint to close applications on 1/15, so students have the opportunity to apply for scholarships after the semester and holidays have ended.

4. It is recommended that the scholarship application deadlines be better communicated to students. The USC was unable to exhaust 3 scholarships because multiple awards were available, but there were not enough applicants to award the scholarships to. While some announcements were made in the Rowan Daily Mail Announcer, it may be better to title these announcements more clearly. In most of the announcements, the headline appeared as “Apply Now for Rowan Foundation Scholarships.” Students may not know that Rowan Foundation Scholarships are the University-awarded scholarships for continuing students. Instead something along the lines of, “Continuing Students: Apply Now for University Scholarships” or “Continuing Students: The Deadline to Apply for University Scholarships in 1/15.” College and department-based communications would also better inform Rowan students of University scholarship availability
5. USC members request a final report of the scholarships awarded based on the committee’s recommendations, and which were changed for AY 2018-19. The USC has been informed, that in some cases, applicants end up receiving too much aid between merit-based, dependent, department and University-awarded aid, so some scholarships end up being awarded to a recipient other than who the USC selected.
 - a. Starting in AY 2019-20, the USC should have an opportunity to select the new recipients for scholarships that need to be re-assigned due to over-awards, since committee members review student applications and have established criteria for evaluating them.
6. It is recommended that members of the USC be able to assist in the development of the new software system that will be used to review scholarships. It would be helpful if USC members could see a demonstration of the new software and offer suggestions for improving it.