

2019-2020
UNIVERSITY SENATE ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Name: University Scholarship Committee

Number of Meetings Held this Year: 4

Committee Chair: Jennifer A. Espinosa

Committee Members: (list here)

Melanie Alverio	Nadia Rahin	
Normal Beil	Jeremy Russell	
Ruben Britt		
Aimee Burgin		
Christina Davidson-Tucci		
DeLithea Davis		
Heather Doblou		
Bethany Gummo		

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:

- Some committee members never received formal notification from the Senate they were serving on the committee. The Financial Aid Office was slow to respond throughout the academic year, often missing important deadlines for the committee's timeline.
- November 2018: USC members voted through email to elect the committee chair due to the Financial Aid's office refusal to offer members training on Scholarship Universe until a chair had been selected.

- December 5th, 2019: The USC met for the first time and discussed the criteria used to evaluate student applications. Committee members were supposed to receive training in Scholarship Universe during this meeting, but Financial Aid could not attend to offer training. We collaborated on solutions to improve our grading criteria for the upcoming scholarship applications we would review.
- January 31st, 2020: USC members met with the chair for training on how to review applications in Scholarship Universe. No representative from the Financial Aid Office attended this meeting.
- February 2020 – March 2020: 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. We only reviewed 9 total scholarships during this period. According to the Financial Aid Office, many scholarships from last year were no longer being funded and several scholarships had no applicants.
- March 25th, 2020: USC members met to evaluate the applicants for each scholarship, and selected the recipients. The committee evaluated 9 scholarships (down from 91 in the 2018-19 academic year) and selected recipients for each scholarship.
- April 4th, 2020: After repeated inquiries from the chair, the Financial Aid office identified 29 additional scholarships for the USC to review. No information or communication was sent to the committee. Instead members only received notifications from Scholarship Universe.
- April 6th, 2020: The chair reached out to the Financial Aid office for clarification on the emails from April 4th, and was informed these were additional scholarships the USC should review.
- April 6th – April 21st, 2020: USC members reviewed the additional scholarship applications, despite the Financial Aid office repeatedly ignoring our pre-planned schedule and enquires in March about missing scholarships.
- April 22nd, 2020: USC members attempted to meet to evaluate the applicants for the 29 new scholarships, but the chair did not have access to the correct pools to complete this process. Instead we only had access to the pools in Scholarship

Universe for the 9 previously decided scholarships and a list of 18 other scholarships, several of which were for incoming freshman or already decided by other entities. We were able to award 3 of those 18 scholarships.

- April 24th – April 29th, 2020: USC members reviewed the 29 new scholarships and selected recipients for them remotely. Four scholarships did not have applicants, and one scholarship did not have any applicants meeting the donor's criteria (these scholarships are crossed off in the following list).

Scholarships Reviewed & Awarded:

1. AAA South Jersey
2. AFT - MLK Scholarship
3. AFT Retirees (FORCE)
4. AFT Retirees Scholarship (FORCE) Camden Campus student
5. Alumni Scholarship (2 Awards)
6. Amelia & Peter Kressler Scholarship
7. Charles Showers Memorial
8. Clifford V & Jane Gullet
9. Darlene S Nardine
10. Denofio Scholarship
11. Doris V Broome (5 Awards)
12. Dr. Bruce Caswell Scholars
13. Dr. Melvin Kramer Scholarship (2 Awards)
- ~~14. Edward and Stella Michals Memorial Scholarship~~
15. Elizabeth Callaghan and Mary Manion Memorial Scholarship
16. Fasulo Family Scholarship in Business
17. Foundation Continuing Student Scholarship
- ~~18. Governor's Scholarship~~
19. HV and Florence P. Lewis Scholarship
20. James & Agnes Shornock Scholarship
21. James John Shornock Jr Scholarship
- ~~22. James John Shornock Sr Scholarship~~
- ~~23. John Sooy Math Education Award~~
24. Lawrence Ward Bromall Memorial Endowed Scholarship
25. Mabel Spencer Warner Scholarship
26. Marie Ann Gemmell (continuing) Memorial Scholarship
- ~~27. Marion Fulginiti-Dragoni Memorial Scholarship~~
28. Matt Hoffman Courage Scholarship
29. Matteo Family Scholarship (2 Awards)
30. Meda "Sandy" Maxwell Education Scholarship (2 Awards)
31. N. Jeanne Hartman Art Scholarship
32. Nicholas Yovnello Scholarship
33. Paul A Hilton Memorial Scholarship

34. Pauline Boykin Endowed Scholarship
35. Peter and Susan Hibbard Scholarship
36. Piazza Stubbs Family Scholarship
37. Robert A. Harris Memorial Scholarship (2 Awards)
38. Robert Collard Memorial Scholarship (2 Awards)
39. South Jersey Gas Scholarship (2 Awards)
40. Stanley and Betty Jane LaBruna Education Scholarship
41. Trymaine Lee Diversity in Media Scholarship

REVISITING PROGRESS ON THE COMMITTEE'S 2018-2019

RECOMMENDATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

2018-2019 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. **This feature is available in Scholarship Universe.**
 - 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.
 - ii. **Instead of listening to the committee's requests regarding the essay, the general application limited student's essays to 500 characters. No upload link was provided on the general application for students to provide more information. This was a severe limitation on the committee this year, as we were very**

restricted in how we could evaluate student essays. The Financial Aid Office has indicated we will meet in July to improve this component of the student application.

- 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. **No progress made on this.**
 - i. 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. **This issue became worse this cycle, because Scholarship Universe contains generic lists of activities that are not matched to the activities and clubs offered at Rowan University. Several clubs and activities offered at Rowan did not appear in the lists, and several clubs and activities not offered at Rowan were available for students to select. The Financial Aid Office has indicated we will meet in July to improve this component of the student application.**
- d. 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. **No progress made on this.**
- e. The software system should separate dependent applicants out completely or clearly identify them to assist the USC during deliberations. **As far as we could tell, Scholarship Universe does do this.**
- f. The software system should auto-populate fields of information from the student application relevant to each specific scholarship. **During our first**

round of reviewing and scoring applications, the USC asked for additional fields to be added to our reviewing pane that appeared in the Scholarship Universe. These requests were ignored and no changes made.

- g. 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. **No progress made on this.**
 - h. 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. **Scholarship Universe appears to take care of this.**
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. **The Financial Aid Office refused to provide a list of changed scholarships, or provide a list of all of the scholarships the USC needed to review this year.**

2018-2019 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. **We were able to return several committee members this academic year, which has been extremely beneficial to the committee.**

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. **We were able to retain several members from the College of Education this academic year.**
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. **The Financial Aid Office completely ignored the schedule of the USC in regards to when applications closed. Further, the only way the chair was able to find out that application cycles had changed was through notifications from Scholarship Universe or through multiple emails to the Financial Aid Office for further clarification. The Financial Aid Office ended up changing the deadline for application submissions 5 times. The original deadline of January 23rd was pushed back to February 2nd, then February 14th, then February 28th, then March 15th, and finally to April 3rd.**
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 **No progress appears to have been made on communicating information to students about available scholarships, considering the application deadline was pushed back 5 times due to a lack of applicants for many scholarships.**

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. **The Financial Aid Office refused to provide this information when requested.**
 - 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. **The Financial Aid Office did give the USC the opportunity to select recipients for the 29 scholarships first (which was an extra cycle for the USC).**
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. **The USC was not consulted or included at all in the development of the application for this scholarship cycle, despite repeated requests to review the application before it went live with students.**

2019-2020 Committee Recommendations:

1. In the next scholarship cycle, communication and cooperation from the Financial Aid Office needs to be improved significantly. USC committee members routinely felt ignored and that the Financial Aid Office did not care about the work they put in to review student applications and award scholarships. After intervention from the University Senate, the Financial Aid Office has indicated they are willing to meet with available committee members and/or the chair of the USC in July to review the student scholarship application and look for changes that need to be made to Scholarship Universe.
2. A representative from the Financial Aid Office should attend USC committee meetings. No representative from Financial Aid attended any of the committee meetings this cycle.
3. The Financial Aid Office should be considerate of the USC committee's established schedule and processes. The USC has an established scoring rubric used to evaluate applicants for all scholarships. The Financial Aid Office made the decision to allow Scholarship Universe to auto select students who are eligible for some scholarships, and then asked the USC to make final decisions on these scholarships. This was extremely difficult to do, since the USC tries to evaluate the overall strengths and weaknesses of a candidate's full application, but in many cases students never completed an application due to "smart matching" in the system.
 - a. The USC follows a similar schedule every cycle. Meetings in the fall semester focus on reviewing scoring rubrics and updating them. The committee reviews student applications between January-March, and makes scholarship decisions in late March or early April. This schedule has worked very well for committee members in the past, and helps members know how to allot their time in the spring so that each student's application can be fully and fairly evaluated. The multiple extensions and lack of communication from the Financial Aid Office in the 2019-2020 cycle has impeded the committee's ability to do this.

4. The USC would like to review the application students will complete prior to the start of the application cycle for the 2020-21 continuing scholarships. There were several issues that need to be corrected in the application, particularly:
 - a. Giving students enough space to write a 300-500 word essay in the application. If that is not possible, then all students should be given the ability to upload a word document containing their essay.
 - b. Matching the lists of activities, clubs, sports, etc. to better match the offerings at Rowan University.
 - c. Adding a question to find out if students are involved in Rowan Athletics.
 - d. The Financial Aid Office has indicated we will meet in July to improve the student application.
5. The USC continues to ask for modifications to the reviewing pane in Scholarship Universe, so that the activities, clubs, sports, etc. that students select will show to reviewers while we evaluate applications.
6. The USC continues to request a report of any changes made to the recipient of scholarships selected by the committee, and the ability to submit a runner-up selection for the scholarship if the original recipient is ineligible to receive the scholarship for some reason.
7. It is recommended that as many committee members who are willing and able, be returned to the USC for the upcoming cycle, considering committee work for next cycle will start in July with reviewing the Scholarship Universe application and setup.