

Contact: Rachel Boon

### UPDATE ON FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING

**Action Requested:** Receive the update.

**Summary:** The universities governed by the Board of Regents implemented *CashCourse* for all new undergraduate students starting in 2017-18. All new, first-year students are automatically enrolled in the course, though the universities vary in how they deliver it. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the in-person options were restricted in 2020-21 which led to a slight dip in participation. Despite that shift, the Offices of Financial Aid found many ways to deliver one-on-one support as well as workshops and other educational opportunities that assist with educating students on effective ways to manage their resources, pay for college, and limit loan debt.

#### **Iowa State University**

At Iowa State University, Cyclone *CashCourse* runs from the beginning of the fall semester until two weeks before the end of the term. ISU employed Peer Educators to support students with questions and encourage completion of the *CashCourse* modules.

Fall 2020 *CashCourse* enrollment (includes all new, first-year students): 5,331

Domestic first-year completed course: 3,290

International first-year completed course: 70

Completion rate: 63.03% (This is an increase of 6.1% from the previous year.)

In addition to Cyclone *CashCourse* financial literacy training, ISU's Office of Student Financial Success, formally Student Loan Education Office, provided additional support for students in 2020-21.

- Individual sessions with 58 students in fall 2020
  - *Large reduction in individual sessions due to allowing students to complete an online course in place of the usual Private Loan Counseling requirement due to COVID-19 and the discontinuation of our office scholarship that was awarded at the end of each term in a random drawing of all students who met with the Office of Student Financial Success*
- Individual sessions with 198 students in spring 2021
  - *Continued to see a large reduction in individual sessions due to COVID-19*
- 18 presentations on budget, credit and borrowing reaching approximately 1,300 students
- Hosted Virtual Financial Literacy Trivia Games and a Virtual "Life After College" (loan repayment presentation) in April for National Financial Literacy Month
- Two full time staff and six undergraduate peer educators
- Meet with students when they borrow their first private student loan
  - *Allowed for online course completion for Fall term and moved to virtual counseling in the Spring term after not seeing a strong reduction in private loans from the Fall course*
- Before they graduate, provide borrowers with exit loan counseling
  - *Saw a large reduction in number of students wanting assistance with completing Exit Counseling for the 2020/21 award year due to loss of office scholarship incentive and a more student-friendly Federal Student Aid online Exit Counseling that launched earlier this year*

### **University of Northern Iowa**

The University of Northern Iowa automatically enrolled all incoming freshmen in Panther *CashCourse* at the beginning of the fall 2020 semester; spring start freshmen were enrolled after census date for the spring 2021 semester. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the in-person workshop option of *Live Like a Student* was not available for the 2020-2021 year.

Fall 2020/Spring 2021 *CashCourse* enrollment: 1,394

*CashCourse* completers: 975

Live Like a Student completers: N/A

Total completion rate: 70%

In addition to the financial literacy requirement, the UNI Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships coordinated a number of other financial literacy outreach initiatives, such as:

- Completed 713 private loan counseling appointments
  - 72 students cancelled their private loan after completing counseling
  - \$1,384,960 total reduction in private loan amount after completing counseling, which is a 21% reduction (about \$2,160 reduction per borrower)
- Hosted Zoom Exit Counseling sessions for graduating students who had borrowed loans.
- For Financial Literacy Month in April 2021, our office coordinated virtual events via social media campaigns.
  - Graduate assistants created a Word of the Day post for each day of the month to help educate students on financial terms.
  - Graduate assistants put together a weekly quiz based on a financial literacy topic of the week. Students who completed the quiz were entered into a drawing for a \$15 gift card to a local business.
- Financial aid counselors completed 2,377 individual appointments with students during the 2020-2021 academic year.

### **University of Iowa**

At the University of Iowa in the fall 2020 semester, 97% of students enrolled in the required course *Success at Iowa* completed the *CashCourse* modules. In the spring 2021 semester, 94% of students enrolled in *Success at Iowa* completed the *CashCourse* modules.

#### **Fall 2020 Enrollment**

Domestic First-Year: 4,391

Domestic Transfer: 831

International First-Year: 53

International Transfer: 15

#### **Spring 2021 Enrollment**

Domestic First-Year: 52

Domestic Transfer: 231

International First-Year: 21

International Transfer: 4

In addition to financial literacy training, the UI Office of Financial Aid provided a variety of programs and services for University of Iowa students during the 2020-2021 academic year, including:

- Presented 40 virtual workshops to over 700 students
  - This number was lower than normal due to COVID-19
- Completed 1,781 required private loan counseling meetings
  - Resulted in average private loan reduction of 4% and total reduction of \$1,011,875 private loan dollars
- Presented to students and parents at Orientation virtual Dollars and Sense session covering financial literacy and student employment

**Future Plans for Financial Literacy Training**

The *CashCourse* modules have been freely available for use through the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE). In 2021, NEFE is transferring ownership of the modules to the Higher Education Financial Wellness Alliance (HEFWA) and it will be available only through paid membership. The universities are collaborating to determine if they will collectively rely on an HEFWA membership to continue to access *CashCourse*, or if they will build their own modules and content that can be somewhat more personalized and targeted than is possible through a vendor provided solution. Each will use *CashCourse* content for fall 2021 and then transition to the jointly determined new model in 2022.