Counselor Internship Program Guidelines

I. Introduction

The Counselor Internship Program was established in January 1998 as an educational training program for high school counselors with the goal of providing counselors with the skills to knowledgeably serve their student populations with regard to financial aid information. Counselors selected to participate in this program serve as summer interns in college financial aid offices across the state. The program objectives include educating counselors on the financial aid processes and improving the communication between college financial aid officers and high school counselors. The program began in the summer of 1998 as a pilot program with 17 colleges and universities benefiting from grants made from NCSEAA to the institutions for the purpose of paying the intern.

II. Institutional Responsibilities

A. Institutions may apply for a grant on an annual basis. Once the grant is approved and intern applications are received, the financial aid administrator is responsible for reviewing counselor applications, interviewing, and selecting an intern. Interns with (1) a basic knowledge of financial aid; (2) a minimum of one academic year of experience working with seniors; and (3) who will have responsibility for seniors or financial aid during the upcoming year, will be given preference for the internship. The institution is responsible for responding to each applicant whose application is forwarded to the institution, regardless of whether an interview is conducted.

B. The length of the internship may be three, four, five, or six weeks. The institution and counselor should determine a length that is mutually agreeable prior to the beginning of the internship period.

C. Institutions should provide responsibilities that are challenging to the intern.

Tasks may include verification, reviewing files, attending freshman orientation programs, and sitting in on student/family conferences, etc. While some data entry or phone experience may be appropriate and helpful for the counselor, as well as
the financial aid office, the percentage of time spent on these tasks should be minimal.

D. Institutions may pay interns on the same time schedule that regular employees are paid and are responsible for notifying the interns at the beginning of their employment of when they will be paid.

E. For the summer of 2012, institutions will receive funds totaling $775 per week of the internship. Of this amount, $700 should be paid directly to the intern as gross earnings. The remaining amount will compensate the institution for their portions of FICA, Medicare, and unemployment taxes. Any excess funds may be retained by the institution to offset supplies and overhead expenses. If an intern does not work for the full period for which funds were received, the unearned portion must be returned to NCSEAA. The institution should contact NCSEAA, which will determine the appropriate amount to be returned.

F. By September 10, 2012 participating institutions should complete and forward an evaluation to NCSEAA (the evaluations forms will be available online to each participating institution in the summer).

G. Representatives from the participating institutions will be expected to participate in state meetings, as needed, to report on their experiences in the program.

III. Counselor Responsibilities

A. Counselors should complete the internship application and return it to NCSEAA.
B. Applicants may undergo an interview with the aid officer at the selected institution.
C. Counselors desiring continuing education units should check with the local personnel administrators of their school systems for eligibility.
D. Counselors are expected to work 30 hours per week of the internship.
E. Interns will complete an evaluation of their internship and return it to NCSEAA within two weeks of the conclusion of their internship.
F. Counselors will be limited to one internship every four years.
G. Counselors will be expected to participate as panelists in state meetings, if possible, to report on their experiences.