Financial aid director plans changes

By Dustin Porter
Around the Campus Editor

When Jenelle Handcox departed from Abraham Baldwin Agriculture College in Tifton, Ga., she did not know what awaited her in North Carolina. After all, Handcox had been a financial aid director of ABAC for 12 years and had earned a bachelor’s degree in criminology from the University of Georgia and a master’s in Public Administration from Valdosta State University.

Handcox was born and raised in Georgia and North Carolina is a completely new environment for her. Handcox said that Geor- gia opened her eyes to financial aid meaning that students leaving high school with the best grades received the most financial aid.

On the other hand, North Carolina operates on a needs-based financial aid program meaning that the student has to provide documentation to see if they are eligible. “I am adjusting well.”

The financial aid office at UNCP has had a lot of changes since the former director Bruce Blackmon’s departure.

Handcox has already started to update policies and one of her first deeds as director was to do away with the requirement that students have to provide documentation to see if they are eligible.

“I have to make an appointment to see me in person, but students can still see financial aid counselors at any time.”

Students are assigned a financial aid counselor alphabetically according to the first letter of their last name.

She added that appointments are necessary because she is constantly in meetings, and if a student schedules an appointment they will get the “time and attention they deserve.”

Handcox said that she has big goals for the financial aid program, but in order to meet those goals students have to understand and interact with the current Standards of Academic Progress.

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The evening began with a warm introduction by Under- graduate Director of Residence Life Cynthia Redfeld ex- pressing her excitement over the diversity of the living and learning programs offered through Residence Life. Students and profes- sors representing historically black fraternities on campus conducted an open- ing question and answer forum.

“Education is key to blacks,” said Kappu Alpha Pi representative Wayne Brown in response to a question stating that merely 26 percent of black men graduate high school.

The director set the stage for Dr. Handcox’s presentation.

The current Standards of Academic Progress require that students must maintain a 2.0 GPA to re- main eligible for financial aid at UNCP at least 67 percent of their classes.

Handcox added that it is better to maintain a 2.0 class than to withdraw because that class is treated the same as an “F” to the financial aid office.

“I advise students to al- ways try to finish a course rather than dropping it and losing aid,” Hand- cox said.

Future

Handcox said that she plans to implement a dead- line for students to complete all of their financial aid paper- work to help workflow issues.

She added that if stu- dents failed to meet the deadline they would lose fi- nancial aid for the upcoming academic year.

Handcox said that one of the goals is to get Braveweb directly linked to the financial aid office to make it easier for students to re- work and make thing simple for students and counselors and the students.

“My plan is to have a student sit down with Braveweb so if a problem occurs they can call in and talk to the counselor can pull up their information and solve the issue promptly,” Hand- cox said.

She added that the new process will work well because of the help from having to do it as much and aid the coun- selors in searching for files because they will now be able to log on to Braveweb and locate all of the stu- dents information opposed to digging through filing cabinets.

Life away from work

Handcox said she is not working hard helping stu- dents find their story. She enjoys shopping or cheering for the Georgia Bulldogs. “I can’t sing or dance, but I love to shop,” Hand- cox said. She added that her fa- vorite activity is interacting with the students, and she meets with an SGA repre- sentative once a week to discuss financial aid issues and “get the word out.”

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