



College and Community Relations

News Release
www.grossmont.edu

CONTACT: Susan A. Herney, College and Community Relations
619-644-7840 susan.herney@gcccd.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 5, 2003

Susan Lipsmeyer Named Grossmont College Innovator of the Year New Approaches Save Students and College Money

El Cajon - Susan Lipsmeyer has figured out a new way to put money where it is sorely needed these days: in the pockets of students, and in the budget of Grossmont College.

It is as easy as EFT, which means Electronic Fund Transfer.

In the old days, Grossmont's Financial Aid Office put checks into the hands of its client students the old-fashioned way. The checks were put in the mail. Postage, handling, returned envelopes with bad addresses, all cost the college money.

Then in 2002, Lipsmeyer and her Grossmont associates succeeded in convincing several local banks to provide free checking accounts to financial aid students, with the ultimate goal of electronically transferring their financial aid checks from the Financial Aid Office into the students' checking accounts. The end goal of that process is to be realized with this 2003-04 school year.

For this, and associated new strategies, Lipsmeyer, director of financial aid, has been named Grossmont's "Innovator of the Year." "We didn't set out just to tinker with the Financial Aid systems," said Lipsmeyer. "I knew we had to find new ways because we just aren't going to get additional staff or resources. This way, we are using technology as the solution to the dilemma facing us. We are now able to do a better job - faster, and without new staff."

One such associated strategy recognizes that, if electronic technology can work in one direction, from college toward student, and save money at the same time, then it can work in the other direction. The result is "Web-Based Tracking," that allows students direct electronic access to their Financial Aid application and back-up documentation via a secure Website. The system is already decreasing the number of student trips to the Financial Aid Office and the resultant expense of staffing counters to answer repetitive questions.

A third associated electronic strategy involves "document imaging," making student documents such as transcripts, tax forms, etc., easily available to Financial Aid advisors who review these at a glance without time spent finding, processing and replacing paperwork files. A link to Admissions (another test site for document imaging) also allows residency, current enrollment status, add-drop history, etc., to be brought into the Financial Aid process in a seamless and efficient way.

Finally, Lipsmeyer created and co-designed a Financial Aid course in which students are oriented to the Financial Aid process, especially the student's responsibilities in fulfilling the many state and federal requirements. The course was first offered in Spring, 1999, and since has been adapted to an on-line environment, again enabling

students to gain knowledge and information about the process without the same questions being asked over and over again at a counter in the office.

All of the innovations taken together constitute an original new way for the college to serve student needs with maximum bang for the buck for both.

Lipsmeyer gives ample credit for this massive series of accomplishments, “(All of this) worked only because the other players all cooperated and got on board. I will continue to push the envelope.”

According to Grossmont College President Dr. Ted Martinez, Jr., “I am proud of Susan Lipsmeyer and our student services staff for taking up this challenge and creating such innovative approaches to better serve our students.”

Congratulations to Susan Lipsmeyer and to the legions of Grossmont College students who now benefit from her bright ideas.

#