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CONTACT: Michael Lemus 916-206-1285

Michael.lemus@csac.ca.gov

California Student Aid Commission to Kick-off Financial Aid Application Season Oct. 1

“Commission focuses on outreach to address enrollment crisis, basic needs through pandemic and beyond”

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Sept. 25, 2020 - As California’s students continue to navigate the many layers of the current crisis — the global pandemic, digital learning, skyrocketing unemployment and an economic downturn — the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) is reinventing traditional outreach programs to encourage more students to apply for financial aid beginning Oct. 1 and help them navigate the enormous challenges facing them today.

“Assuring that our students know various forms of aid are available is more crucial than ever, especially during this ongoing public health and economic crisis,” said CSAC Executive Director Marlene Garcia. “The Student Aid Commission is stepping up in new ways to support them now so that the most vulnerable Californians don’t lose out on their opportunity to obtain a higher education and economic mobility.”

As the nation’s largest financial aid administrator, CSAC is committed to ensuring students, policymakers and educators have accurate information and resources regarding financial aid packages during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. The Commission is now offering monthly financial aid training [webinars](#) and will host its second annual [California College Affordability Summit](#) in November to discuss the importance of improving college access and increasing enrollment, particularly in vulnerable student populations.

The coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing economic fallout [has exacerbated a preexisting basic needs crisis at California colleges](#), hurting historically vulnerable students the most. Many students have great concern about what the future holds, uncertainty about where they will attend, and how they will afford college and other basic needs expenses, according to CSAC’s recent COVID-19 student survey. Some of them are abandoning their Fall enrollment plans altogether – an occurrence known as the “[Summer Melt](#).”

In an effort to reach those who may be considering stopping out, CSAC is reaching out to students through its [California Student Opportunity and Access Program](#) (Cal-SOAP,) offering overall support and resources to help keep them enrolled. CSAC partners with colleges and universities throughout the state to reach their vulnerable students and encourage them to attend.

The official kick-off date for the new financial aid season is [October 1](#) when California students and families can [apply](#) for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) and Chafee Grant to receive college financial aid for the 2021-2022 academic year. Interested students and families can also attend free Cash for College [workshops](#) for help completing the FAFSA, CADAA and Chafee applications. To expand our efforts and reach additional student populations throughout the state, the commission has also developed a Train the Trainer Program, which will equip community partners with the tools and resources they need to host their very own Cash for College workshops. The state financial aid priority deadline is March 2, 2021. The Cal Grant deadline for foster youth and students attending a California community college is September 2, 2021.

“Regardless of online instruction and immigration status, there is still financial aid available for all of California’s diverse students,” Garcia said. “Deadlines may be months away, but students and their families should file their applications as soon after the October 1 opening date as possible.”

As both the administrator of the state’s \$2.8 billion financial aid system and advocate for student success, the Commission is fueled by its mission to make higher education financially accessible for all Californians, especially during this time of crisis and can serve as a resource to help the state navigate financial needs for various student populations.

Garcia added, “Our students’ futures are hanging in the balance, and the Commission wants them to know we are here to help and be a valuable resource.”

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The California Student Aid Commission administers the state’s \$2.8 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the Cal Grant, the Middle Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing a higher education. Visit our website at <https://www.csac.ca.gov> or follow us on Twitter @castudentaid.