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Student Aid Commission Praises Gov. Newsom and Legislature’s Historic \$255 Million Expansion of Cal Grant Access in 2021-22 State Budget Agreement
Budget reflects significant steps toward equity, opens opportunities for more students

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Tues., July 13, 2021 – The California Student Aid Commission applauds Governor Newsom and the Legislature for historic investments in students and expansion of the Cal Grant in the 2021-22 State Budget. The 2021-22 State Budget eliminates Cal Grant eligibility restrictions based on age and time out of high school for students at community colleges, making thousands of additional students eligible for financial aid – an enormous step in making higher education affordable for all students in California.

“The expansion of access to the Cal Grant is truly groundbreaking, particularly for adult and returning learners seeking higher education,” said Marlene Garcia, Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission. “These changes are pivotal to supporting overall success and ability to upskill and reskill. A financial aid system that focuses on financial need – not age or time since high school graduation – will make college possible for more students than ever before in California.

“These transformative investments in the Cal Grant program makes financial aid more inclusive and advances our mission to promote educational equity by making postsecondary education affordable for all Californians,” Garcia noted.

In addition to the major expansion of financial aid access, the 2021-22 State Budget also includes several other critical investments and new programs that will be administered by the Commission, including:

- \$155 million to remove barriers to Cal Grants based on age and time out of high school for community college students. These new community colleges Cal Grant recipients will also be permitted to retain their Cal Grant when transferring to a UC or CSU.
- \$500 million to establish the Golden State Education and Training Program and award grants to displaced workers seeking to attend a community college, CSU, or UC.
- \$500 million to expand the Golden State Teacher Grant Program to serve more students seeking to become teachers and commit to serving a high-needs school in a high-needs field.

- \$200 million to create the Learning Aligned Employment Program and offer students a state-funded work-study opportunity related to their field of study on campus or at non-profit and private sector entities.
- \$20 million to provide current or former foster youth with an enhanced Cal Grant Access Award of up to \$6,000.
- A new requirement that public high schools confirm that their graduating high school seniors complete an application for financial aid or an opt-out waiver.

Commission Chair Catalina Cifuentes stressed that a more systematic approach to helping more students leave high school with financial resources available to them for postsecondary education will unlock new possibilities for thousands of California students.

“This Budget reflects an understanding by Gov. Newsom and the Legislature of the critical role that financial aid plays in making higher education accessible and truly fosters the talented workforce that drives our economy.”

The Commission looks forward to working with students, partners in higher education, and business leaders to put the State Budget programs into action, as well as continuing discussions with policymakers about the next critical steps to maximize these important expansions and achieve the essential full reforms of state financial aid with approval of the [Cal Grant Equity Framework](#) reflected in [AB 1456](#).