

Fast Blast

California Student Aid Commission

From Diana Fuentes-Michel
Executive Director, California Student Aid Commission

December 11, 2007

In support of the Commission's ongoing goal of providing California's financial aid community with proactive and current updates, we are providing this update on programs and projects. Please share this with any interested person who may not have received this newsletter.

CHAFEE Funds Expended

The Commission has obligated all FY 2007 CHAFEE funds to more than 3,000 foster youth students. Awards will continue to be processed as funds are returned from institutions due to ineligible students.

CHAFEE grants provide up to \$5,000 a year for career and technical training or college to qualified foster youth. Grants may be used to help pay for child care, transportation and rent while the student is in school. CHAFEE Grants can be used at any eligible California college or university or career or technical school, as well as schools in other states.

CHAFEE, also known as the Education and Training Voucher, is federally and state funded and is subject to the availability of funds each year.

Student Support Services Call-in Hours Extended

During the last two weeks of February 2008 the Commission will extend its Student Support Services Branch call-in hours to 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The additional support will assist students who have questions regarding the March 2nd filing deadline.

New Option for Submitting the FAFSA

Students will soon have a new way to obtain the FAFSA. The U.S. Department of Education will offer a PDF version of the 2008-09 FAFSA at www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov as early as

January 7. The PDF application can be completed on the computer or by hand and then mailed to the address provided for processing.

The online FAFSA on the Web is still the easiest and fastest way to submit the FAFSA. The 2008-09 version will be available at www.fafsa.ed.gov starting January 1.

With more than 95 percent of FAFSAs being submitted online today, schools may no longer order the paper FAFSA in bulk. The USED is making this change to discourage students from filling out the hard-copy counterpart before completing the online version. (If schools have students who will be submitting the paper FAFSA, they may make a special request for up to 50 copies by going to www.fsapubs.org or by calling 800.394.7084.) Instead, students are encouraged to complete the FAFSA on the Web Worksheet ahead of time. The worksheet follows the flow and logic of the online FAFSA which the paper FAFSA does not. The 2008-09 worksheet is now available at www.fafsa.ed.gov. The worksheet is still available for bulk order.

Students and families may request up to three copies of the paper FAFSA or the worksheet by calling toll free 800.4FED.AID (800.433.3243).

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education offers a number of publications to help students complete the FAFSA. These

publications and others may be ordered online at www.fsapubs.org or by calling 800.394.7084.

- *Do You Need Money for College?* brochure includes tips for completing the FAFSA
- *FAFSA4caster Hall Pass* flyer explains the benefits of FAFSA4caster
- [FAFSA on the Web Poster](#)
- *Start Here* bookmark (Spanish and English; also available in Braille)
- *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid* (also available in Spanish and Braille)
- *Counselors and Mentors Handbook on Federal Student: A Guide For Those Helping Students Prepare for Postsecondary Education* 2008-09

Electronic GPA Submission

In accordance with Chapter 652 of the statutes of 2006 (SB 1383, Ortiz), the Commission is now accepting GPA uploads from high schools for the 2008-09 March 2 Cal Grant Entitlement awards. Electronic submission is secure, fast, and minimizes errors. Schools are encouraged to prepare and upload their 2008-09 year GPAs as soon as possible so that any necessary additions or corrections can be made prior to the Mar 2 deadline. For additional information on the 2008-09 Cal Grant GPA Verification, go to www.csac.ca.gov/login.asp and click on Operations Memo GOM 2007- 36.

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)

A student who does not meet the requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent in the academic year immediately preceding the award year, but who meets the requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent by December 31 of the academic year immediately following the date of application, satisfies the requirement of obtaining high school graduation or its equivalent for the purposes of the Cal Grant eligibility. For additional information, go to www.csac.ca.gov/login.asp and click on Special Alert.

300 Cash for College Workshops Now LIVE!

Send your students, parents, staff, and public information officers to the "Find A Workshop" locator at the www.calgrants.org website. More than 300 workshops have been registered by nearly 150 high schools, community colleges, university campuses and community groups. At the Workshop Finder page, visitors can enter a zip code, or a city or county to find nearby workshops. Not all workshops have been registered, so remind students to check back for new workshop listings up to the March 2 Cal Grant deadline. Students can click on the "What To Bring" link for a list of income and tax documents they can begin gathering to bring to a workshop.

E-Minders and "Fave Five" E-mail Features Coming Soon to the Cash for College Website

Beginning January 1, students can visit the Cash for College website to sign up for updates and "e-minders" to help remind them about upcoming workshops, what to bring to a workshop, and approaching deadlines. They will also be able to tell their friends about Cash for College and how to find a workshop nearest to them by clicking on the new "Fave Five" feature.

Public Awareness Campaign Update

The 2008 Cal Grant Public Awareness campaign will continue its multi-layered approach of previous years. Our team will reach out to students and their families through digital internet banners, radio, television, the College Cash Crew Captains, press events and grass roots efforts to get the word out about Cal Grants and access to education beyond high school.

Our internet banner ads and search engine optimization capabilities will help reach teens where they live and work. Our internet call to action will continue to guide students and their families to the calgrants.org Web site for help in English and Spanish and to our toll-free customer service center for one-on-one

help. Additionally, we will promote access to help with completing the required forms by guiding families to local Cash for College workshops.

In January, look for the inspirational tone of the “Cal Grant: Your Ticket to Success” radio and TV ads with the tag line, “Cal Grant: Where will it take you?” You can always view and listen to the ads by going to calgrants.org and locating the campaign commercials under the Press Room.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year and appreciate your continued support to help students obtain their educational goals.

The College Cash Box – a cornerstone piece of the Commission’s public awareness campaign for years – is in the final stages of distribution to high schools and financial aid administrators throughout California. The College Cash Box includes information and publications that may be ordered for use to get the word out about Cal Grants and other financial aid that will help students access education beyond high school.

College Cash Crew Captains

Last year the Commission introduced the College Cash Crew as media spokespersons. These exciting individuals shared their personal stories about how a Cal Grant helped to make college accessible to them. We are currently completing our selection process for the 2008 College Cash Crew Captains.

Commission Executive Director to Speak at CASFAA and CCCSFAAA Conferences

I am honored to have the opportunity to speak to the Commission’s many valued partners and stakeholders at the annual CASFAA and CCCSFAAA conferences in San Francisco. Through your support, students are provided the tools necessary to begin a postsecondary education experience and gain a higher quality social and economic life.

I will address the significant challenges that the Commission faces as we continue to serve our students and the positive steps we are taking to ensure that we continue to remove financial barriers for those seeking post-secondary opportunities. Commission staff will provide updates on Cal Grants, loan forgiveness programs, strategies for effective financial aid advising for former foster youth, and APLE. I hope to see you there.

Talk with us- The Commission appreciates any comments or feedback you may have regarding the *Fast Blast*. Please forward your comments to fastblast@csac.ca.gov. If this message reaches school staff who are not currently on the Commission’s ListServ and wish to be added, they can log on to csac.ca.gov and click on Links and CSAC List Services.

