

FAST BLAST



OUR MISSION: "Make education beyond high school financially accessible to all Californians."

DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL, *Executive Director, California Student Aid Commission*

August 15, 2008

2008-09 Cal Grant Programs Update

The Commission is dedicated to keeping you informed of the latest Budget information pertaining to our programs. To date, the Commission does not have authority to issue Cal Grant funds in the absence of a signed 2008-09 Budget. However, Commission staff remains committed to ensuring all award processes continue so that awarded funds can be disbursed once the Budget is signed.

Cal Grant Renewal Process

The 2008-09 Cal Grant renewal awards process will continue through December 2008. The Commission renewed more than 191,000 Cal Grant award offers to potential participants. Students who do not have a 2007-08 payment or a leave of absence posted on WebGrants must establish their eligibility to receive a renewal award or they will be withdrawn.

The Commission produces two reports located on [Webgrants](#) that help identify students whose renewal Cal Grant eligibility is unclear; 1) *Unable to Determine Rosters* and 2) *Automatic Leave Reports*. We encourage schools and students to update school attendance and enrollment statuses.

Top Two Percent Cal Grant B Entitlement Awards

The "Top Two Percent" awards have been processed and selected students have been notified. The award amounts listed on the rosters now reflect the new award amounts. Additional information on the "Top Two Percent" can be located in [GOM 2008-13](#).

Competitive Cal Grant

The new Competitive Cal Grant A and B awards were offered as tentative awards based on the Governor's proposed budget to eliminate the Competitive Program. Consequently, newly selected Competitive Cal Grant A and B awardees have been placed in the "Not in Attendance" (NA) section of the school roster to reflect the tentative nature of their award and to make sure that schools deciding to package these awards do so only on a deliberate basis. Due to system programming changes, payment delays of up to three weeks could be realized for the Competitive Cal Grant Program should the outcome of the final state budget include a reduction in the number of Competitive Cal Grant awards or award amounts.

Transfer Entitlement Awards

The Commission began processing the Transfer Entitlement (E2) awards this week and will continue until all the Transfer Entitlement Verification Forms (G-6) are processed to determine the eligibility of qualified applicants. Staff anticipates completing all E2 awards by the end of the month.

Cal Grant C Awards

The Commission mailed Cal Grant C Supplements to applicants who were not selected for a Cal Grant A or B award. Cal Grant C Supplements were also mailed to select Cal Grant A and B students who met the Cal Grant C criteria in case the Competitive program is eliminated. Please refer to GOM 2008-8 for details explaining this process and action to be taken.

To date, the Commission has not yet started the processing of Cal Grant C Supplements due to the processing of the G6 forms. Commission staff anticipates processing the supplements beginning next week. Cal Grant C awards cannot be made until we know the final outcome of the Competitive Cal Grant Program. This is due to the scoring system in place that allows those applicants who were offered a tentative Competitive Cal Grant to compete in the Cal Grant C award process should the program be eliminated. The Commission staff anticipates completing the processing of Cal Grant C Supplements by mid-September.

We will continue to communicate with you on the outcome of the final budget and the impact on the students we serve. If you have any questions about the 2008-09 fall term advance, please contact Tae Kang at (916) 464-2945 or at tkang@csac.ca.gov. Questions regarding the Competitive Cal Grant Program should be directed to Bryan Dickason at (916) 464-8919 or at bryand@csac.ca.gov

Community College September 2 Cal Grant Application Submission Information

The Governor's 2008-09 proposed Budget eliminated new Competitive Cal Grant awards. However, the Legislature rejected that proposal. Commission staff will, therefore, continue to process all September 2 Competitive Cal Grant applications and inform students of their *tentative* new Cal Grant award. If the Competitive Cal Grant programs are

eliminated when the final budget is enacted, the Commission will notify schools.

2008-09 Cal Grant Community College Competition

Students who did not receive a Cal Grant award from the March 2 application process, or who applied after March 2, but by September 2, 2008, may be considered for the 2008-09 Community College award competition. Additional information about the 2008-09 Cal Grant College Competition can be located [GOM 2008-14](#).

Cal Grant GPA Verification Process and Submission

The September Community College Cal Grant GPA Verification form and instruction sheet are posted on the Commission's Web site at [GOM 2008-14](#). We encourage schools to utilize [Webgrants](#) to submit GPAs.

California Community College Enrollment Verification and Submission

Enrollment data files are to be uploaded directly to the Commission through WebGrants. Users have the option to upload a complete data file or to enter individual records. The enrollment record layout specifications are the same as last year. A copy of the record layout can be accessed at [GOM 2008-14](#).

WebGrants New Secure Data Transfer Capabilities

The Commission has implemented a secure file transfer capability within WebGrants in response to Federal and state laws and regulations that require financial institutions to handle, store, transfer and destroy confidential material in a secure manner. The new system capabilities provide more security than mailing, shipping and e-mailing. The system also provides a secure repository for information.

Training information on how to use the new system can be found on the Help screen within [Webgrants](#) under the section titled "Security".

We are asking all financial aid offices to begin using this new feature to transfer confidential data. If you have any questions regarding the new data transfer capability on WebGrants, please contact School Support Services at 888.294.0153 or e-mail schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov.

AB 2260 Signed into Law

The Commission is pleased to announce that Assembly Bill 2260, sponsored by the Commission, was signed into law on August 4, just two days before the Governor announced his decision to not sign any bills until he received a budget agreement.

In 2007, an internal audit revealed a discrepancy between the Competitive Cal Grant A and B awards in the California Education Code: The law allowed use of any college GPA for consideration of a Competitive Cal Grant A, but only allowed use of a community college GPA for Competitive Cal Grant B. This is contrary to historical

Commission practice, and, according to legislative analysis from 2001, the year the law was instituted, contrary to the original intent of the Legislature. Therefore, the Commission sought to remedy the inequity.

The Commission thanks the Assembly Higher Education Committee, Committee Chair Anthony Portantino and Committee Consultant Laura Metune, for their willingness to carry this bill and communicate with Commission staff throughout the expedited process. We also thank the Senate Education Committee Consultant, Nancy Anton, for her assistance, both Houses, and the Governor for recognizing the inequity of current law and acting so quickly to rectify it.

Chafee Grants

Last week, the Commission offered more than 800 Chafee grants.

The President Signs the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008

The President has signed H.R 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008. This 1,158-page bill is the first complete reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act since 1998. This bill will create several new student and institutional aid programs by:

- **Reforming the financial aid application process** by creating a two-page EZ-FAFSA over the next five years and allowing the Department of Education (ED) to work with the IRS to pre-populate much of the form with tax data.
- **Addressing rising college and textbook costs** by requiring the ED to publish detailed data about textbook pricing on its Web site and requiring institutions with the greatest cost increases to explain why and what steps they are taking to keep costs down.
- **Restoring integrity and accountability to student loan programs** by requiring financial aid offices to establish and follow a code of conduct and creating a student "self-certification" process for non-federal private educational loans, to ensure students maximize low-cost federal aid first and prevent students from borrowing more private loans than needed to cover college costs.
- **Increasing grant aid for the neediest students** by increasing Pell Grants from \$4,800 to \$6,000 for 2009 and to \$8,000 for 2014; allowing students to receive Pell Grants year-round, to help them accelerate the completion of their degrees; and creating the Grants for Access and Persistence program, a new matching grant program to allow states to increase need-based grant aid to students.

- **Making states accountable for their commitment to higher education** by requiring a "maintenance of effort" from them to increase spending on higher education by at least as much as they increased it, on average, over the previous five years. If states fail to do so, College Access Challenge Grant funds will be withheld.

The bill also contains new benefits for military and disabled students, strengthens teacher preparation programs and nursing faculty programs.

Additional information about H.R. 4137 can be located at: [HR 4137](#).

*Your ideas and feedback are important to the Commission.
Please forward your comments to Fastblast@csac.ca.gov*