

# FAST BLAST



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

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

May 12, 2009

## Commission Endorses President Obama's Student Aid Proposal

The California Student Aid Commission voted to support President Obama's concept in the 2010 Budget proposal to originate all new federal student loans through the Direct Loan Program and to use the savings to create a stronger and more reliable Pell Grant program.

The Commission also adopted a motion stating that the Direct Loan Program should provide quality services essential for students, including, among other things, default aversion, outreach, early withdrawal counseling, and training for financial aid officers, and that those services should specifically address the diverse needs of the students and institutions.

## Governor's Proposals to Revise the 2009-10 Budget

The Governor's 2009-10 Budget proposed to decentralize the Cal Grant program and consolidate the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) and California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) for a proposed savings of approximately \$2 million. The Governor also proposed to reduce the Cal Grant program by \$87.5 million, including eliminating new Competitive awards. While these proposals were not included in the 2009-10 Budget Act, they were re-introduced in an April 1, 2009 Finance Letter.

The details of these proposals were just recently released. The Legislative Analyst's Office 2009-10 Budget Analysis Series "Higher Education", located at [www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov), provide some analysis of the proposals.

The Commission invited representatives from the following organizations to attend the Commission's April 16, 2009 meeting to solicit open discussion on the proposals.

- Governor's Office – Office of the Secretary of Education
- University of California
- California State University
- California Community Colleges

- Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities
- California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools
- California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
- California Community Colleges Student Financial Aid Administrators Association
- California Postsecondary Education Commission

As a result of the discussion, the Commission voted to convene a taskforce in partnership with stakeholder representatives to address the delivery of Cal Grants.

We will continue to keep you informed regarding the progress of the task force and any updates pertaining to the Governor's proposal.

**MORE THAN 71,900 STUDENTS HAVE BEEN OFFERED A 2009-10 NEW CAL GRANT HIGH SCHOOL ENTITLEMENT AWARD**

## 2009-10 Cal Grant Competitive Awards

The Commission has completed the selection of the eligible Cal Grant Competitive awards. In May, postcards will be mailed to the awarded students notifying them of their tentative award and requesting that they sign up for WebGrants for Students for further information and requirements.

Please advise your students that they may view their eligibility status on WebGrants for Students located at [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org).

More than 100,400 financially eligible applicants were considered for the March 2<sup>nd</sup> Cal Grant Competitive awards. Disqualification letters were not sent to non-awarded applicants.

## 2009-10 Cal Grant Transfer Entitlement Awards

The Commission sent notices to more than 14,700 applicants with potential California Community College Transfer Entitlement eligibility. These potential recipients

must complete a Transfer Entitlement Cal Grant Certification (online or by paper) to be considered for an award. Students can complete the online form by logging on to [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org). A paper certification form (G-6) may also be downloaded at [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov).

### 2009-10 Cal Grant C Awards

Eligible Cal Grant C students will receive postcards in May that direct them to WebGrants for Students to obtain the required Cal Grant C Supplement form. Students selected to receive the postcards will have 30 days from the date of the postcard mailings to complete the required form and return it to the Commission. Upon acceptance of the Supplement data, the Commission will score and rank the applicants to select the 7,761 authorized Cal Grant C awards.

The online Supplement is expected to be available by May 18, 2009. Students may complete the supplemental information online or by paper. An Operations Memo will be sent as soon as the online Supplement is made available.

### Grant Rosters

Rosters displaying 2009-10 award recipients are now available on WebGrants. Students selected for Cal Grant High School Entitlement and Competitive awards can be viewed in the "eligible" section of the roster. Schools may now process school change transactions. Please remember that schools may not report payment transactions for the 2009-10 academic year until early August 2009. Watch for upcoming details.

### California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) celebrates 30 years

At the April 16, 2009 Commission meeting, Chair Barry Keene, his fellow Commissioners and Executive Director Diana Fuentes-Michel were pleased to present a resolution to the Project Directors from one of the state's most longstanding educational outreach efforts, Cal-SOAP, commemorating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Established in 1978, the program improves the flow of information about postsecondary education and financial aid while raising the academic achievement levels of low-income elementary and secondary school students, students in geographic regions with documented low eligibility or college participation rates, and those who are first in their families to attend college.

Cal-SOAP projects operate in 17 areas throughout the state and offer a diverse scope of services, including academic tutoring and guidance, college and career awareness training and Cash for College workshops.

The Cal-SOAP infrastructure is an inter-segmental union of school districts, public and private colleges and universities, and community-based organizations.

Approximately 83 percent of Cal-SOAP participants enrolled in a California public college or university after high school graduation in 2007 compared to the statewide rate of 47 percent.

In 2008-09, the Cal-SOAP consortia served more than 135,000 K-12 students throughout California.

### New GDS Web Services

Client schools may take advantage of the Commission's first GDS Web Service capability. The new GDS Web Services allow schools to download, view and edit the Grade Point Averages (GPA) in WebGrants online and submit them to WebGrants in a real time mode.

This is the first of many Web Services that the Commission will be offering to schools.

### WebGrants for Students (WGS)

All students who have signed up for WGS now have access to information on the new WGS Home Portal on WGS. WGS is a secure website where students have access to their Cal Grant information 24/7. We invite schools to visit the new and improved Home Portal at [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org).

On WGS, students can view important information about Cal Grants, Chafee and other forms of financial aid. Students can also submit online changes to their student accounts, which simplify processing and expedite processing time.

### E-mails and Postcards Sent to Students

In an effort to reduce printing and mailing costs, the Commission is now mailing postcards and sending e-mail messages to Cal Grant applicants and recipients to inform them of their Cal Grant status or necessary application information.

Postcards and e-mail messages sent by the Commission can be viewed by schools on WebGrants by clicking on the "E-mail Messages and Postcards Sent to Students" link on the WebGrants Help Menu.

*The Commission remains dedicated to keeping you apprised of any new information that may affect our programs. Please forward your ideas and comments to [Fastblast@csac.ca.gov](mailto:Fastblast@csac.ca.gov)*