

# FAST BLAST

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

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



September 24, 2009

## Message from Executive Director, Diana Fuentes-Michel

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed half of the Commission's budget to administer the Cal Grant and other financial aid programs—reduced from \$13 million to \$6.7 million. Restored funding is crucial to avert serious affects to the Cal Grant program and to ensure continued disbursement of awards to students.

Assembly Bill 187 establishes a pilot alternative delivery system for the Cal Gant program and restores \$4.3 million to the Commission's operating budget in order to maintain student services statewide. Although the bill had substantial Legislative and Administrative support, it did not pass the Senate Floor before the session ended. However, the Senate did unanimously grant the bill reconsideration for the new legislative session beginning in January.

During the next few months as we await the new legislative session in January, the Commission and staff will work within the current allocated budget and continue to administer all vital resources, specifically, the awareness, notification and disbursement processes vital to the appropriate and timely delivery of financial aid to hundreds of thousands of California students.

We thank you for your support and advocacy efforts and will continue to keep you updated on any new developments or requests for assistance.

## Extended Call Center Phone Hours

Due to a higher volume of calls from students and parents seeking answers about the Cal Grant program and other financial aid, the Commission has extended its Customer Relations Branch phone hours. Commission staff will be available to assist students, parents, and schools from 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. through Oct. 15, 2009.

## 2009-10 Cal Grant Fall Advance

The fall term advance process, which includes the transmission of electronic fund transfers (EFT), has been initiated.

Due to concerns from our segmental representative partners about the IOU redemption process, fall term advances were delayed until cash was made available to process by EFT. EFT and paper warrants were processed as regular payments on September 11, 2009. The WebGrants roster for 2009-10 was activated on September 14, 2009.

## 2009-10 Chafee Update

Award announcement letters were processed for the 2009-10 academic year and were mailed to all eligible Chafee recipients on September 3, 2009. Chafee payments should arrive on campus in the next 2 weeks.

The Commission is no longer processing 2008-09 Chafee applications. Any unallocated federal funds will be used to make awards for the 2009-10 academic year. To date, the Commission has awarded more than \$12 million to 3,136 foster youth students.

## 2009-10 Cal Grant C

All authorized Cal Grant C awards have been met. More than 47,000 students were determined eligible to compete for a 2009-10 Cal Grant C award. Notification letters have been sent to eligible students. Schools may view the new Cal Grant C recipients on their rosters.

In May, students were asked to complete the new online supplement in WebGrants for Students. Of the approximately 18,000 supplements received, only 3,000 were paper.

If you have any questions, please contact School Support Services at (888) 294-0153 or [schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov).

### **2009 Cash for College Workshop Scholarships**

More than 1,000 students who participated in Cash for College workshops received grants of up to \$4,000 from the generous donations of College Access Foundation and MDRC.

Cash for College is a collaborative system of businesses, government and community based organizations which support financial aid opportunities for students. Additional information on College Access Foundation can be found at [www.collegeaccessfoundation.org](http://www.collegeaccessfoundation.org). MDRC is a non-profit, nonpartisan social policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Managed by MDRC, Cash for College is participating in a national Performance-Based Scholarship Demonstration study. This study is providing six types of scholarships to randomly selected students ranging in amount and length of time; with most tied to academic performance criteria. Additional information on MDRC can be found at [www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org).

We thank our partners for their generous support of equal access to education for all Californians.

### **CalSOAP Consortium Executive Director Presented Prestigious Award**

Monica Montenegro, Executive Director of the East Bay CalSOAP Consortium, was presented the Executive Leadership Award of Excellence at the National College Access Network's Annual Conference Awards of Excellence Brunch on Thursday, September 17.

The Executive Leadership Award of Excellence recognizes the dedication and hard work of an individual serving as a college access program's Executive Director, President or as a member of its Board of Trustees or Directors.

Ms. Montenegro has served as the Executive Director of the East Bay Consortium of Educational Institutions, Inc. in Oakland, California for more than 9 years.

### **Keeper of the Flame Award Recipient**

The Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project's Keeper of the Flame Award was presented to Despina Costopoulos, California Student Aid Commission's Cash for College Coordinator, for her dedication to ensuring equal access for postsecondary education for California Latinos.

Congratulations to Despina for receiving this recognition and to the many financial aid staff who assist the Commission in our Cash for College efforts.

*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)*