
6.a

Action/Information Item

California Student Aid Commission

Consideration of Proposed California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Annual Program Plan Process and Method of Funding Cal-SOAP Projects for Fiscal Year 2008-09

The Commission directed staff to develop a method for allocating funding for the 2008-09 state fiscal year for the California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP). The Commission also requested that staff seek advice and comments from the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee and the Cal-SOAP Project Directors in developing an evaluation process. A Cal-SOAP Advisory Subcommittee joined the Project Directors meeting on March 17, 2008 to discuss the staff's proposed minimum requirements, evaluation criteria, and scoring process. While not necessarily in agreement with staff's proposal, those in attendance did provide constructive suggestions that staff used to develop a proposal. The final staff recommendation, however, wasn't finalized and distributed until just before the Commission's Programs, Planning and Budget (PPB) Committee meeting on March 28, 2008.

CSAC staff, the chair of the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee, a representative of the advisory committee's ad hoc subcommittee, and several project directors were in attendance at the March 28, 2008 PPB meeting. A number of project directors also participated via telephone.

At the PPB meeting staff explained the proposal for evaluating the Cal-SOAP Annual Program Plans (APP) and allocating funding for 2008-09. The proposed evaluation criteria are based on statutory requirements; however, all agreed that there is some subjectivity involved in the evaluation process. Staff also proposed a specific weighting of the criteria and scoring process utilizing staff evaluators. This process is similar to how the state processes requests for proposals (RFPs).

The PPB Committee then asked the advisory committee members and the project directors for their comments. The advisory committee members and project directors indicated they were concerned with establishing the reliability of an evaluation tool and ensuring transparency in the scoring and funding process. They also recommended that there be sufficient time to further develop and norm the evaluation and scoring process and that it not be used for the 2008-09 funding allocations.

The PPB Committee concluded that there was insufficient opportunity & time for consultation and norming with regard to the scoring process in order to base 2008-09 allocations on the established criteria. Therefore, the PPB

Committee is recommending that the 2008-09 funding not be based on an evaluation process.

One additional 2008-09 funding consideration not discussed at the PPB meeting was the funding of the new Solano Consortium. In 2007-08, the project directors agreed to spread the \$2.2 million reduction in varying percentages based on the prior year's funding levels and the establishment of a minimum funding level of \$300,000. The Commission modified these percentages to allow funding for a new Solano Consortium.

The SUCCESS Consortium who serviced the Solano area in the past was not funded for 2007-08. The Commission set aside \$131,250 for the reestablishment of a Consortium in the Solano area in 2007-08. A \$75,000 planning grant was awarded to the Solano Cal-SOAP Consortium, through the UC Berkeley Center for Education Partnerships for 2008-09. The planning grant allowed for the establishment of the new Consortium. The Consortium has submitted a plan for services through June 2008, which the staff is reviewing. The \$56,250 remaining from the set-aside is available to fund these services. Staff recommends that the Solano Consortium 2008-09 funding be increased to a standard minimum funding level.

The project directors and the Advisory Committee subcommittee recommended that the 10% proposed cut in the Governor's Budget be apportioned across the board. The San Diego and Imperial Counties Consortium offered, similar to last year, to take a larger portion of the reduction to maintain a minimum funding level of \$300,000 for all the projects. Staff has requested that the project directors meet prior to the Commission meeting to try to reach consensus on the 2008-09 minimum funding level and percent of reduction for each consortium, while also funding the new Solano Consortium at the minimum level.

Each Cal-SOAP prepares an APP as the plan of action for the upcoming fiscal year. The APPs are developed based on a specific budget. The Commission has typically taken action on the funding allocations at the June meeting. The Consortia would prefer to know the funding levels in April in order to develop their APP. Therefore, 2008-09 funding recommendations will be presented at the Commission meeting. If the Governor proposed any changes to the 10% budget reduction in the May Revision, the funding allocations would need to be revisited prior to the Commission's June meeting.

Recommended Action: To approve 2008-09 Cal-SOAP funding allocations.

Responsible Persons: Dan Friedlander, Chair
Programs, Planning and Budget
Committee

Janet McDuffie
Acting Chief of Public Affairs, Research &
Policy Analysis

6.b

Action/Information Item

California Student Aid Commission

Consideration of a Process for Developing the Criteria and a Procedure to Evaluate the Performance of California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Projects and a Method for Funding Cal-SOAP Projects in Future Fiscal Years

As noted in Tab 6a, the Programs, Planning and Budget (PPB) Committee met on March 28, 2008 to discuss a method for allocating funding for the 2008-09 state fiscal year for the California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP). A portion of the staff's proposed minimum requirements and evaluation criteria is included in Tab 6b1. The proposed evaluation criteria are based on statutory requirements; however, all agreed that there is some subjectivity involved in the evaluation process. After careful consideration of the staff's proposal and the concerns raised by the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee members in attendance and the Project Directors, the PPB Committee concluded that there was insufficient opportunity & time for consultation/norming with regard to the scoring process in order to base 2008-09 allocations on the established criteria. More broadly, the Commission needs to determine how to define success and establish quantitative standards for making comparisons.

The PPB Committee felt that they needed more time and consultation for defining clear standards of success. The PPB Committee recommended that staff propose a specific time frame to ensure that the standards, established through a process of consultation will be in place for 2009-10 funding decisions.

The PPB Committee recommends that the Annual Program Plans (APP) the Consortia prepare include the projects' plans for meeting the staff's proposed evaluation criteria and that the APPs go through a practice scoring process during the year (after the criteria, weighting, and scoring process are finalized) with an understanding that 2009-10 funding will be based on performance. Staff will revise the APP instructions to direct the Consortia to submit necessary information.

Staff proposes meeting with the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee and Project Directors as needed during the next few months and soliciting assistance from external evaluators to develop standards of success and evaluation criteria, and to norm the evaluation and scoring process. The staff may also suggest periodic meetings with the PPB Committee to address specific issues that can't be resolved with the advisory committee

and project directors. The goal is to have a proposal ready for the Commission's consideration at its February 2009 meeting. By obtaining approval of the standards and evaluation criteria in February, the Consortia will be prepared to make adjustments to their 2009-10 proposals in time for the Commission to allocate funding in April 2009 and to allow for appeals in June 2009.

Recommended Action:

1. That the APPs include the projects' plans for meeting the staff's proposed evaluation criteria;
2. That the evaluation criteria and process for scoring and allocating funds be developed through a collaborative process with the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee, Project Directors and external evaluators; and,
3. That the APPs go through a practice scoring process during the year (after the criteria, weighting, and scoring process are finalized) with an understanding that 2009-10 funding will be based on performance.

Responsible Persons:

Dan Friedlander, Chair
Programs, Planning and Budget
Committee

Janet McDuffie
Acting Chief of Public Affairs, Research &
Policy Analysis

Consideration of a Process for Developing the Criteria and a Procedure to Evaluate the Performance of California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Projects and a Method for Funding Cal-SOAP Projects in Future Fiscal Years

Issue Summary

The Commission directed staff to develop a method for allocating funding for the 2008-09 state fiscal year for the California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP). The Commission also requested that staff seek advice and comments from the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee and the Cal-SOAP Project Directors in developing the evaluation process. A Cal-SOAP Advisory Subcommittee joined the Project Directors meeting on March 17, 2008 to discuss the staff's proposed minimum requirements, evaluation criteria, and scoring process. While not necessarily in agreement with staff's proposal, those in attendance did provide constructive suggestions that staff used to develop the proposal being presented today.

The Cal-SOAP program has been in existence since 1978. No system-wide evaluation of the program has been conducted since 1996. The Commission has developed an operational manual and conducted program audits, but has not developed standards for Cal-SOAP. One of the key messages received during the March 17, 2008 meeting, was the need for the Commission to develop standards for the Cal-SOAP program. Staff noted that the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee's role is to advise the project directors and the Commission on the development and operation of the projects. The development of standards for the Cal-SOAP program is needed and should be addressed by this advisory body during the coming year.

While Cal-SOAP projects must meet statutory requirements, the projects are developed to meet the specific needs existing in their local areas. Due to the Cal-SOAPs historic development and the local governance structure, the implementation of projects have varied regionally depending on the focus of program activities, which have developed in response to local and regional priorities and concerns.

The services provided are also broad and include advising, academic preparation, and financial aid information dissemination. However, consortia approaches to providing these services range from general program information (such as brochures), tutoring, workshops, one-on-one tutoring and advising, and college tours.

Therefore, staff developed an approach to this evaluation and allocation process based on the statutory requirements. The projects should be able to describe their goals, indicate how their services are meeting their goals and how they are measuring their effectiveness. The evaluation and scoring factors are designed to assess each program's quality and effectiveness in meeting the statutory goals.

Evaluation Process

The Cal-SOAP Annual Program Plan (APP) is the project's plan of action for the upcoming fiscal year. The APP document requires program description, data, and narrative on how the program services will be implemented in the project's designated services area. The APP is the primary document supporting the contract between the Commission and the consortium for funding for the Cal-SOAP project.

Tab 6.b.1

Consideration of a Process for Developing the Criteria and a Procedure to Evaluate the Performance of California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Projects and a Method for Funding Cal-SOAP Projects in Future Fiscal Years

Staff proposes an evaluation process similar to the State Request for Proposal (RFP) process, which includes the following:

1. Minimum Requirements
2. Evaluation Criteria
3. Scoring Process
4. Allocation of Funds
5. Appeal Process

Per the State Contracting Manual, an RFP must be as precise as possible to ensure that all proposals are accomplishing the same goal. An objective evaluation procedure must be used to determine which proposers have complied with the RFP requirements and to whom the contract should be awarded. When an evaluation committee is used, they shall be from the agency soliciting the proposals or awarding the contract. Private consultants may only be used to provide clarification or subject matter expertise to the committee members. If the contract is awarded by a state board or commission, the recommendations of the evaluations committee shall be considered advisory in nature, and the board or commission must make the ultimate decision unless statute expressly permits the board or commission to delegate that responsibility.

Minimum Requirements

California Education Code Sections 69560-69566 stipulate the following in regards to the Cal-SOAP Program:

1. The minimum configuration of a consortium;
2. The consortium governing board's responsibilities;
3. The students who should be served;
4. The program goals;
5. The direct involvement of secondary school staff;
6. The allocation of at least 30 percent or the equivalent of the project grant to stipends for peer advisors and tutors;
7. The total resources shall, at a minimum, match the state funding; and,
8. The minimum components of a project proposal.

The statute also requires that projects be located throughout the state in order to provide access to program services in rural, urban, and suburban areas. However, because this is the Commission's responsibility in the allocation of funding, it is not a minimum requirement for the Cal-SOAP projects.

Staff proposes the following minimum requirements a Cal-SOAP consortium:

- The Consortium must not have any outstanding compliance findings
- The Consortium must not have any outstanding Commission reports
- The completed APP must be postmarked by the deadline date.

Tab 6.b.1

Consideration of a Process for Developing the Criteria and a Procedure to Evaluate the Performance of California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Projects and a Method for Funding Cal-SOAP Projects in Future Fiscal Years

- The submitted APP must contain all required documents
- The submitted APP must demonstrate the Consortium is meeting the following statutory requirements:
 1. §69561(c)(1):
Increase the availability of information for targeted students on the existence of postsecondary schooling and work opportunities.

§69561(b): Targeted Students are defined as being from low-income families, first in their family to go to college, or students from schools or geographic regions with documented low-eligibility or college participation rates.
 2. §69561(c)(2):
Raise the achievement levels of targeted students so as to increase the number of high school graduates eligible to pursue postsecondary learning opportunities.
 3. §69561(f):
Each project shall be proposed and operated through a consortium that involves at least:
 - one secondary school district office;
 - at least one four-year college or university;
 - at least one community college; and
 - at least one of the following agencies:
 - a nonprofit educational, counseling, or community agency; or
 - a private vocational or technical school accredited by a national, state, or regional accrediting association recognized by the United States Department of Education.
 4. §69561(h):
The governing board of each project, comprising at least one representative from each entity in the consortium, shall establish management policy, provide direction to the project director, set priorities for budgetary decisions that reflect the specific needs of the project, and assume responsibility for maintaining the required level of matching funds, including solicitations from the private sector and corporate sources.
 5. §69561(i):
Prior to receiving a project grant, each consortium shall conduct a planning process and submit a comprehensive project proposal to include, but not be limited to, the following information:
 - The agencies participating in the project;
 - The students to be served by the project;
 - The ways in which the project will reduce duplication and related costs; and

Tab 6.b.1

Consideration of a Process for Developing the Criteria and a Procedure to Evaluate the Performance of California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Projects and a Method for Funding Cal-SOAP Projects in Future Fiscal Years

- The methods for assessing the project's impact.
6. §69561(j):
Each project shall include the direct involvement of secondary school staff in the daily operations of the project, with preference in funding to those projects that effectively integrate the objectives of the Student Opportunity and Access Program with those of the school district in providing services that are essential to preparing students for postsecondary education.
 7. §69561(k):
Each project shall maintain within the project headquarters a comprehensive student-specific information system on students receiving services through the program in grades 11 and 12 at secondary schools within the participating districts. This information shall be maintained in a manner consistent with the law relating to pupil records.
 8. §69561(l):
At least 30 percent or the equivalent of each project grant shall be allocated for stipends to peer advisers and tutors who meet all of the following criteria:
 - Work with secondary school students;
 - Are currently enrolled in a college or other postsecondary school as an undergraduate or graduate student; and
 - Have demonstrated financial need for the stipend.
 9. §69564:
Allocation of any funds shall be limited to those consortia meeting requirements of this article that will provide equal matching resources from existing or budgeted increases in federal, state, local and private funds. It shall be the goal of the program that the total resources provided by the Student Opportunity and Access Program shall match state funding on at least a 1.5 to 1 ratio. Any new projects approved through expansion of the program shall provide equal matching resources for the first three years of operation and shall be encouraged to increase the matching resources to a 1.5 to 1 ratio with the state grant thereafter.

APPs that meet these minimum requirements and contain all requested documentation will be reviewed, evaluated and scored based on established evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria

Cal-SOAP projects have implemented their services in a variety of ways. The types of services and levels of services are dependent on many factors, including, but not limited to: where the Cal-SOAP is located, the amount of funding allocated, other outreach efforts provided, consortium board membership and involvement, project director management, fiscal agent considerations, etc.

Tab 6.b.1

Consideration of a Process for Developing the Criteria and a Procedure to Evaluate the Performance of California Student Opportunity Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Projects and a Method for Funding Cal-SOAP Projects in Future Fiscal Years

With so many factors that could be considered, staff concluded that the evaluation of projects should be based on factors reviewed from the statutory requirements of a Cal-SOAP project. Therefore, staff considered each of the statutory requirements and determined which could be used as the basis for the evaluation criteria. Staff discussed the proposed criteria and the information and/or documentation that could be used to assess the Cal-SOAP APP at the March 17, 2008 meeting noted above.

There was considerable discussion at this meeting regarding each of the items and how they would be used. Based on this discussion, staff revised the list of evaluation criteria and the information/documentation being reviewed.

Staff proposes the following seven (7) evaluation criteria:

1. Governing Board Responsibilities [§69561(h)]
2. Secondary School Involvement [§69561(j)]
3. Reduction in Duplication of Services and Costs [§69561(i)(3)]
4. Increasing the Dissemination of Information regarding postsecondary schooling and work opportunities [§69561(1)]
5. Raising Achievement Levels of Targeted Students [§69561(2)]
6. Method for Assessing the Project's Impact [§69561(4)]
7. Match Requirement [§69564]

Scoring Process, Allocation of Funds, and Appeal Process

Staff proposed scoring, allocation and appeal processes. However, these processes will be discussed further with the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee, Project Directors and external evaluators in an attempt to reach consensus. These processes will be presented to the Commission in time to be used for 2009-10 funding allocations.