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Information Item

California Student Aid Commission

Update on Report on the Study to Assess the Accuracy of Self-Reported High School Graduation Data

On June 23, 2006, the Commission directed Student Aid Commission staff (staff) to work in collaboration with Grant Advisory Committee (GAC) members to design a study which would determine the accuracy of self-reported high school graduation data reported by new entitlement recipients on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). With that directive, staff and GAC members worked together to identify participants for the study and develop the study methodology; data was gathered and analyzed. The following provides a synopsis of the methodology with the results.

Recommended Action: Informational, review the study results.

Responsible Staff: Paula Rockwell, Research Manager II
Governmental Affairs and Research
Division

Report on the Study to Access the Accuracy of Self-reported High School Graduation Data Reported to Cal Grant Participating Institutions by New Entitlement Recipients

The Research and Policy Analysis Branch (Research Branch) and Grant Advisor Committee Special Research Work Group (GAC) worked in collaboration on the Commissioner's request to verify self-reported graduation of the 2006-2007 new entitlement students that completed a FAFSA in March 2006 and were awarded a Cal Grant. In a special workgroup meeting on September 18th, staff and GAC members discussed the development of the study. It was recommended that staff generate a list of students who had indicated graduation on their FAFSA and then, send a letter to their attending high school to verify that the student had indeed graduated as they had reported. Staff worked with GAC to develop a random sample of 502 students which correlated to 149 high schools throughout California.

In order to gather data, staff developed a two-sided letter to be mailed to the high schools which asked them to report if the student had graduated, had not graduated or other. Other was included in order for high schools to report if they did not know the student's status, if no record was found or if the student had moved or left school. On October 4th, letters were mailed to the selected high schools which included a list of their identified study participant students. The letter asked the schools to verify graduation of the students and return their results to staff by October 13th. Letters continued to be received past the deadline and so staff continued to count incoming responses from the first letter until November 8th. Per GAC recommendation, the letter was mailed out again to those schools which had not responded. This second mailing asked the schools to provide a response by November 22nd. A sample copy of the letter that went to the schools is included for your review. *Please be advised that due to the timing of this informational packet, any outstanding data will not be included below but will be presented at the Commission meeting if the results vary greatly from initial findings.*

The survey sample consisted of a random selection of 149 schools and a student study population of 502 students. The surveys were sent to the last high school each student attended as reported on their FAFSA. See Table 1

Table 1: High School Graduation Verification Study Results

	Number	Percent %
Number of students surveyed	502	
Number of high schools identified to participate in survey	149	
Number of high schools that responded	107	72%
Number of high schools that did not respond to survey	42	28%
Number of high school students that we received survey information on	374	75%
Number of students whose high school have not reported students' graduation status	128	25%
Number of students that "did graduate"	364	73%
Number of students reported "did not" graduate	4	<1%
Number of students high school reported as "other" or "no record"	6	<1%

The results show that of the 502 students identified, we received responses for 374 and of those, 364 had graduated from their attending high schools, 4 had not graduated and 6 were reported as other or no record.

During the recent GAC Workgroup meeting, the preliminary results of the study were shared and discussed. Staff was asked to contact those 4 students for whom their high schools had reported they had not graduated but had been awarded a Cal Grant and determine: if they had graduated and if so, by what alternate method, if they were enrolled in college and if so, at what segment? Staff also informed the students of their Cal Grant eligibility status, as students who had graduated by another means, would still be eligible for a Cal Grant award. The data show that these 4 non-high school graduates did complete their high school graduation through other means and therefore, are still eligible for Cal Grant. See Table 2.

Table 2: Follow-up On Students Reported Not Graduated By Their High School

Question	Student #1	Student #2	Student # 3	Student # 4
1. Did you graduate from high school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. How did you graduate	GED	Equivalent	Charter School	Diploma
3. Are you enrolled in college	No	Yes	No	Yes
4. Where are you enrolled	N/A	Community College	N/A	American University
5. Follow-up notified of eligibility for Cal Grant (reserved award status)	Yes	Yes – was aware of Cal Grant benefit	Yes	Yes
6. Segment originally listed on FAFSA by student	ICU	CCC	ICU	UC

Note: Student #4 high school graduation status was misreported.

Staff also followed up with the 6 remaining students for whom the high schools reported as other or they had no record. See Table 3. Students #1 and #2 report having graduated with a diploma which was misreported by their high school.

Table 3: Follow-up on Students Reported as Other or No Record

QUESTION	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3	Student #4	Student # 5	Student # 6
1. Did you graduate from high school?	Yes	Yes	N/A (Left messages – did not return call to CSAC)	N/A (Left messages – did not return call to CSAC)	N/A (Non – English speaking)	N/A (Left messages – did not return call to CSAC)
2. How did you graduate?	Diploma	Diploma	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3. Are you enrolled in college?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. Where are you enrolled?	Heald	Cypress Community College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5. Notified of Cal Grant eligibility.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6. Segment listed on FAFSA.	ICU	CCC	ICU	PCC	PCC	ICU

Note: Several attempts were made to reach students # 3, 4 and # 6 – not able to verify their high school graduation status. Research staff unable to communicate with student #5, only one attempt was made.

CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION



{Address}

To: High School Counselor or Registrar

Re: Class of 2006 High School Graduation Verification

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) requests that you please provide high school graduation information for the students listed on the reverse side of this letter. These are students who completed the FAFSA and are eligible for a Cal Grant A or B. This request is part of an evaluation CSAC is conducting of the integrity of the Cal Grant award process now that the CAHSEE requirement is in place.

The list on the reverse side includes Class of 2006, students' last name, first name and date of birth. Please indicate by checking "Yes" for each student who received a high school diploma by the end of your final graduation summer opportunity and please provide their graduation date. Please indicate "No" if the student did not graduate. Or, mark "Other" if for example, the student left school, moved, went into another program or took another option. For your convenience, a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope is enclosed for the return of the document.

We appreciate your support and respectfully request that you respond by October 13, 2006.

Thank you for your participation. Please contact me at (916) 526-8428 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Paula Rockwell
Manager

Tab 7.f.1

INSTRUCTIONS: Please identify graduation by marking Yes and providing a Graduation Date. Please mark No if the student did not graduate or failed to meet graduation requirements. Or, mark Other if for example, the student left school, moved, went into independent study or took another option.

Student's Last Name	Student's First Name	Date of Birth	Yes	Graduation Date	No	Other
Smith	John	3-13-89				
Jones	Mary	4-14-89				