

Item 2

Information Item

California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Project Directors Report

Nicole Korgie-Jackson will make a brief oral presentation at the meeting. The following is the written Cal-SOAP Project Director report.

The Cal SOAP Project Directors held a three day retreat in Sacramento on August 3, 4, and 5. The experience was extremely beneficial and time well spent. Projects Directors were able to solidify a growing positive relationship with CSAC staff and have very productive conversations regarding current program operations and the long and short term goals of the program.

The Project Directors were especially grateful for the time spent with Commission Chair Geiogoue and Commissioner Graves. Both Commissioners were extremely positive in their interaction with the Directors and we felt that they truly cared about and understood our work.

Highlights of the meetings are abundant but a few priority issues are listed here:

Cal SOAP Evaluation RFO

Commission Chair Geiogoue began the conversation with a few basic questions and with discussion and input from the Directors, suggestions for final evaluation questions were crafted to include in the RFO.

The RFO process is expected to be implemented in September. The full evaluation should be completed by the end of this calendar year. Monica Roberts from Sacramento Cal SOAP will be the representative Project Director on the Evaluator Selection Committee. Again, the Project Directors appreciate being directly involved in this process and we eagerly look forward to the results.

Cal SOAP Manual

The last approved update to the Cal SOAP Operations Manual was in August 2004. After all Directors provided input, a select group of Directors met to finalize a revised draft of the manual to be presented to CSAC for approval. This process included a re-examination of some policies that may need to be updated or adjusted (student employee hiring limitations, professional development funds, definition of level of services).

Cal SOAP Database

This continues to be a challenge. CSAC is in the process of implementing the steps necessary to put in place a Business Analyst to re-evaluate the needs of the projects and how the database can be adjusted to meet these needs. During the course of our discussions, several additional challenges were identified that will make data collection a continued challenge as we move forward into the new academic year.

California Student Aid Commission

Timeliness of Annual Program Plan (APP) and Disbursement of Contracts

As we are now back on the state general fund budget with an adjusted fiscal year, Directors have requested that the APP submission process occur well in advance of the state budget finalization so that if Cal SOAP funding is approved, letters of intent to fund and contracts can be disseminated in a timely manner. Traditionally, contracts have been received several months into the fiscal year and, over time, this has caused problems with fiscal agents. In the past, good faith or notices of intent to fund were sufficient to begin program operations. Currently, most fiscal agents now require an actual contract before allowing expenditure of funds.

Follow Up From June Commission Meeting

At the June meeting, Commissioners indicated that data was needed on college going indicators at Cal SOAP schools. While there is no central collector of this data at the state level, the Lead Project Director is in the process of researching possible sources of information to put together an overview of data for Cal SOAP schools.

*****As a final note, all of the Project Directors would like to extend a special thank you and acknowledgment to CSAC staff for the positive strides in communication and flow of information. While we have many challenges ahead, we trust that our voices are being heard and progress will be made.*****

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