

# Item 10

## Action Item

### Consideration of the Commission's policy on travel to Washington, D.C.

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#### Background

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) does not have a formal policy concerning trips to Washington, D.C.

As discussed in Item 10.1, Chair Geiogoue is currently operating under the guideline that federal relations are under the jurisdiction of the Legislative, Audit and Budget (LAB) Committee and that the CSAC would make trips to Washington, D.C. if it were necessary to address a major financial aid issue or if our physical presence is requested. If there is a need for such a trip, there should be a focused agenda and a goal i.e., something the commission wants to communicate or learn more about.

In June, former Commissioner Conley proposed that the CSAC establish a separate committee "comprised of two commissioners and one staff member that will make an annual trip to Washington, D.C., to address current student aid issues that affect post-secondary California students and influence the broader topic of national student aid." The Commission deferred action on this proposal so that the LAB Committee could review it and make a recommendation.

**Recommendation:** Do not establish a separate committee, but keep jurisdiction over federal relations with the LAB Committee. Direct staff to develop a CSAC Federal Policy Agenda to be presented at the February Commission meeting which should address, but not be limited to, such issues as strengthening the Pell Grant program, reducing student loan debt, streamlining the FAFSA application, and implementation of the new October 1, 2016 FAFSA deadline using prior-year income data. This Federal Policy Agenda will serve as a core document in guiding the commission's federal visits as warranted.

**Responsible Person(s):** Jamillah Moore, Chair LAB Committee  
Hal Geiogoue, Chair CSAC

## Item 10.1

### Current Guidelines for CSAC/Commissioner travel to Washington, D.C.

Currently, CSAC staff and/or Commissioner travel to Washington, D. C. is warranted if there is a major national financial aid issue to address or if our presence is requested by members of Congress and/or the Administration.

This guideline recognizes that Washington, D. C. visits are infrequent because CSAC is generally well informed on national student financial aid issues without the need to travel. This information comes from the CSAC staff coordinating with public and private institutions of higher learning, along with various state and national associations and financial assistance experts who stay on top of trends and issues that relate to financial aid. If a major national financial aid problem or issue arises, staff knows about it and informs the Commission. If the Commission is concerned about a federal issue, there are normal channels within which we can make our views known. Conversely, if staff and elected officials in other states or in Washington, D.C. seek financial aid information from us, we are always willing to help and inform them.

This guideline recognizes that in some circumstances travel to Washington, D.C. is justified. If the Commission, working through the LAB Committee, decided that the best option to deal with a financial aid issue of significant importance to California justified a visit to Washington, D.C., then our representatives would be appointed, an agenda developed and appointments set up. The cost of such travel is also an important consideration. It would be weighed against the purpose, justification and benefit of each trip.

In summary, currently CSAC Commissioners and/or staff will travel to Washington, D. C. if there is a major issue to address or if our physical presence is requested. If there is such a justified need to go, there should be a focused plan, and a goal i.e., something the Commission wants to communicate or learn more about.