

# Item 15

## Information Item

### Update on the Dream Act

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This item provides an update on 1) the 2014-15 California Dream Act application and award process that concluded with the final reconciliation in November 2015 and 2) the current 2015-16 academic year.

**California Dream Act Applications and Awards Continue to Rise**

Table 1 shows the number of new California Dream Act applications submitted for each academic year since the program's implementation. In addition to the Cal Grant program, the California Dream Act application is used for different types of state financial aid available to AB 540 students. Therefore, those students who do not meet Cal Grant eligibility requirements use the application to be considered for other financial aid that the campus may offer them.

**Table 1  
New California Dream Act Applications**

	<b>2013-14 Counts</b>	<b>2014-15 Counts</b>	<b>2015-16 Counts*</b>
<b>On Time (met March 2 deadline)</b>	20,746	27,366	30,718
<b>After March 2</b>	16,524	13,166	10,515
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>37,270</b>	<b>40,532</b>	<b>41,233</b>

\*2015-16 is not yet complete.

Table 2 shows the California Dream Act award offers, withdrawals and payments by segment. The 2,885 students were withdrawn on Friday, November 20 as part of the 2014-15 year end process. In most cases, these students were given over 15 months to take action on their Cal Grant awards before the withdrawal. As shown, most of the dreamer students are offered Cal Grant awards at the Community Colleges, while the UC segment has highest paid rate compared to other segments.

**Table 2  
California Dream Act Award Offers & Payments by Segment**

	<b>2014-15</b>				<b>2015-16*</b>		
	<b>Awarded</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>Paid Recipients</b>	<b>Paid Rate</b>	<b>Awarded</b>	<b>Paid Recipients</b>	<b>Paid Rate</b>
<b>Community College</b>	3,905	1,877	2,121	54%	4,003	1,457	36%
<b>UC</b>	1,142	127	1,042	91%	1,170	864	74%
<b>CSU</b>	2,638	770	1,970	75%	2,847	1,580	55%
<b>Priv. 2-Yr Non-Profit</b>	1	1	-	0%	1	-	0%
<b>Priv. 4-Yr/Priv. Grad</b>	201	79	126	63%	220	103	47%
<b>Vocational/Hospital Ed.</b>	40	31	13	33%	33	11	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,927</b>	<b>2,885</b>	<b>5,272</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>8,274</b>	<b>4,015</b>	<b>49%</b>

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\*2015-16 is not yet complete.

Table 3 below illustrates the California Dream Act paid rate by Cal Grant Program.

**Table 3  
California Dream Act Award Offers & Payments by Program**

	2014-15				2015-16*		
	Awarded	Withdrawn	Paid Recipients	Paid Rate	Awarded	Paid Recipients	Paid Rate
<b>High School Entitlement</b>	6,466	2,421	4,189	65%	6,975	3,331	48%
<b>Transfer Entitlement</b>	1,181	310	968	82%	1,082	605	56%
<b>Cal C</b>	280	154	115	41%	217	79	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,927</b>	<b>2,885</b>	<b>5,272</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>8,274</b>	<b>4,015</b>	<b>49%</b>

\*2015-16 is not yet complete.

Prior to the November 19, 2015 withdrawal deadline, students received multiple communications to take action on their Cal Grant award. All Dream Act students who had a Not in Attendance (NA), Incomplete File (FI) or no reason code reported in WebGrants had their Cal Grant awards withdrawn on November 30, 2015 if no further action was taken.

Staff sent out a final communication to these students on October 23, 2015 before the year-end withdrawal took place. In addition to the letter, staff attached a questionnaire to 2,018 students to discover the reasons why their Cal Grant award was not utilized. A total of 350 responses were received as of December; a response rate of 17 percent. Many of the students that responded successfully preserved their awards for the 2015-16 academic by requesting a leave of absence on the survey.

### **2015-16 Questionnaire Findings, Conclusions and Next Steps**

To better understand the low paid rates, these questions were asked on the questionnaire:

1. *Did you know you were awarded a 2014-15 Cal Grant to help you pay for college expenses?*
2. *Are you currently attending a California college or university at least half-time (6 or more units)?*
3. *What best describes why you didn't use your Cal Grant this year:*
  - *Not enough other financial aid, I couldn't afford to attend college.*
  - *I had other obligations, like work, I didn't attend college.*
  - *I attended out-of-state or a non-Cal Grant eligible school.*
  - *I didn't know I had a Cal Grant.*
  - *Other (explain)*

Questionnaire results show that more than 60 percent of students that responded were enrolled and attending college in California for the 2014-15 academic year, but were unaware of their Cal Grant award offers. The Commission notifies eligible applicants of their award offers at the time of initial indication of eligibility. The communication is sent by email to students who have valid email addresses, and a paper letter is mailed to those with no valid email address. To increase awareness among Dream Act students of their award offers, Commission staff plans to implement an improved communications plan to enhance the outreach to eligible awardees, including sending out more notifications to those who remain unpaid and following up with institutions each month regarding unpaid awardees.

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The remaining responding students indicated that they did not attend college in California or were not eligible for financial aid for various reasons, including having other obligations and/or were not attending at least half time.

### **Updates to the 2015-16 California Dream Act Application, Website, and Selective Service Registration**

Improvements to both the Commission's website and California Dream Act application were made to better serve students and campuses utilizing the application. Commission staff gathered feedback from external stakeholders to ensure enhancements being made would improve not only the function of the application, but also its maneuverability and access to vital information.

In order for male students to receive a financial aid payment, they must register with the U.S. Selective Service System (Selective Service). As reported in past Commission meetings, this is one of the barriers for male dreamers with a Cal Grant award to receive a timely payment. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) currently allows applicants to register with the Selective Service online. In an effort to streamline the Selective Service registration process and align itself with the FAFSA, the Commission revised the 2015-16 California Dream Act Application to include an acknowledgement and optional Selective Service registration statement. Commission staff is currently working with the Selective Service agency to create a data exchange to electronically register male students who answered yes on the Dream Act application. Commission staff anticipates the registration option will help reduce confusion and streamline the Selective Service registration for applicants and should avoid delays in their financial aid disbursement.

### **2016-17 California Dream Act Application Update**

The 2016-17 California Dream Act Application was successfully released on the California Dream Act website on January 1, 2016. Commission staff worked diligently to streamline both online and paper applications. As of January 19, 2016, we have received 2,922 2016-17 California Dream Act applications.

We will continue to provide updates at future meetings about our efforts to administer this important program.

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