

Item 3

Information/Action Item

Consideration of an evaluation report on the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP)

Under the oversight of CSAC since 1978, the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) has been providing services intended to improve postsecondary opportunities for socio-economically challenged elementary and secondary school students.

Based on questions raised at the June 2015 commission meeting, CSAC engaged Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting in 2015 to conduct a program evaluation of the Cal-SOAP projects to identify significant characteristics of the projects and determine the effectiveness of the program. The report is attached as Item 3.1. The report responded to ten questions:

1. Why do Cal-SOAP projects have different amounts of state and local matching budgets? Is the minimum state funding grant adequate to fund a program?
2. Do all Cal-SOAP projects provide the same services? If not, how and why do they differ?
3. Are the Cal-SOAP projects operating effectively and efficiently? Are the processes, resources, and systems currently in place appropriate to ensure the effective and efficient operations of Cal-SOAP within the following levels: CSAC, fiscal agent, and consortium?
4. Are the Cal-SOAP projects operating at full capacity given their individual funding levels?
5. What data are available to monitor the performance of the Cal-SOAP projects? How can this data be improved?
6. What would be the impact on the existing Cal-SOAP projects if some of their funding were to be reduced and reallocated to fund new Cal-SOAP projects elsewhere in the state?
7. How do Cal-SOAP projects work with other outreach programs such as AVID, GEAR UP, TRIO, and UC's EAOP?
8. Do the demographics of the students targeted by Cal-SOAP projects vary across projects? How do the projects determine which students to target? To which students do they prioritize services, if at all?
9. Do the projects encourage students to access particular pathways to postsecondary education rather than others? (Do they discourage certain pathways?)
10. Are there any data to indicate whether students who accessed Cal-SOAP services were more likely to attend college? More likely to persist? More likely to transfer or receive a degree?

California Student Aid Commission

The evaluators found overall positive performance of Cal-SOAP, and found that students who receive Cal-SOAP services are more likely to attend college than students who did not. Further, Cal-SOAP projects are operating at full capacity, and any reduction or reallocation of Cal-SOAP funding to new or existing projects would lead to cutbacks in current services provided by existing Cal-SOAP locations.

Additionally, the evaluators found that there are possibilities for improvement in the consistency and detail of the data elements being collected to evaluate the performance of the program, as well as the processes used to collect that data. These improvements would better enable the measurement of the program's overall performance. Finally, the evaluators found opportunities for enhancing positive performance of the program, such as more standardized performance metrics.

Representatives from Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting will present the report at the Commission meeting. Commission staff will also be available to answer questions.

Responsible Person(s): Kurt Sjoberg, Partner
Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting, Inc.

Mashariki Lawson, Senior Consultant
Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting, Inc.

Lien Luu, Managing Senior Consultant
Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting, Inc.

Catalina Mistler, Chief
Program Administration and Services Division

Steve Caldwell, Senior Manager
Program Administration and Services Division

California Student Aid Commission

California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) Evaluation

Deliverable #4 – Final Report January 20, 2016

Submitted To (via E-Mail):

Catalina Mistler
California Student Aid Commission
11040 White Rock Road, Suite 100
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Submitted By:



455 Capitol Mall • Suite 700 • Sacramento, California • 95814 • Tel 916.443.1300 • www.secteam.com

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	1
II. Introduction and Background	3
III. Answers to Evaluation Questions	5
IV. Additional Evaluation Observations	14
A. Developing a Statewide Performance Measurement Framework	14
B. Cal-SOAP State Funding is Used to Establish Minimum Service Levels But Maximizing Other Funding Sources Allows for Additional Service Offerings	21
C. Efforts to Improve Cal-SOAP Administration Should Continue	22
V. Appendix A: Detailed Scope & Objectives	24
VI. Appendix B: California Education Code Sections 69560 - 69566	26

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

I. Executive Summary

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) engaged Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting to conduct a program evaluation of the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP). CSAC specifically set forth ten questions to guide the evaluation. The questions generally related to Cal-SOAP budgets and funding, efficiency and effectiveness of operations, coordination of efforts with other programs, and Cal-SOAP performance. We answer each of the questions in detail in Section III of this report¹.

To accomplish the evaluation's scope and objectives, Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting visited 13 active consortia sites², interviewed consortia management and staff, observed program activities, held discussions with CSAC officials, and analyzed records at the state and local levels. Based on this work, we believe that Cal-SOAP project management and staff demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication delivering the services to targeted students, have established excellent working relationships with their boards, fiscal agents and stakeholders, and administer their staff, budgets, and operations in an efficient manner.

In addressing CSAC's ten evaluation questions, we generally found that while Cal-SOAP projects have varying amounts of state and local matching budgets, the projects operate at full capacity, offering a wide portfolio of services to students meeting the Cal-SOAP eligibility criteria. However, we also found that improvements can be made in the area of performance measurement and reporting.

The different budget amounts between Cal-SOAP locations is largely due to locations closing, merging, and new ones opening over the program's 40-year history, as well as the ability of each consortium to leverage local matching funds from its members. Without matching contributions, Cal-SOAP projects could not sustain the level of student service currently provided. In fact, Cal-SOAP state funding alone is not sufficient to fully cover the staffing component of Cal-SOAP project expenses although Cal-SOAP program staff and student tutors comprise Cal-SOAP's human capital—without which Cal-SOAP would not exist. Over the years, Cal-SOAP locations have become adept at planning and aligning their service offerings within the constraints of their respective budgets. Consequently, any reduction or reallocation of Cal-SOAP funding to new or existing projects would lead to cutbacks on current services provided by existing Cal-SOAP locations.

Despite the budget challenges, we found that Cal-SOAP projects strive to tailor their service offerings to their region's specific student demographic needs. As such, while all projects provide a range of academic, advising, and outreach activities that fall within specific service areas such tutoring, financial aid awareness and planning, or college visits, the specific service offering is not the same for each region. Specifically, Cal-

¹ See Appendix A for the evaluation's detailed scope and objectives as well as a complete listing of the ten questions.

² The 14th consortia, Los Angeles, was not active as of the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year, and was therefore not visited.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

SOAP student demographics can vary significantly between regions—from urban, high density, small geographical areas with multiple languages spoken to a rural, geographically widespread area with only one other primary language. Therefore, the demographics of student population and geographical area are individually evaluated by each Cal-SOAP consortium to identify the most suitable approach in providing Cal-SOAP services. In addition, to maximize reach into the student population and mitigate service duplication, each Cal-SOAP consortium works closely with other local, state, or federal student advisory programs. Regardless of the varying service offerings, we found that students who utilized Cal-SOAP services are more likely to attend college than those students who did not receive any Cal-SOAP services.

While the Cal-SOAP program is undeniably assisting students in achieving postsecondary education, the existing data and processes used to report on the program's success need improvement. Cal-SOAP consortia currently are required to report a variety of data elements and statistics to CSAC; however, the tools used to capture the data as well as the data points themselves are lacking consistency and detail to measure the program's overall performance. CSAC is aware of the issues and together with the Cal-SOAP Project Directors has begun taking concrete steps towards addressing these problems.

Additionally, in Section V of this report, we identify and describe opportunities we believe can further enhance the overall Cal-SOAP program statewide. These areas include more standardized performance metrics, clarifying and defining key program services, and further utilizing existing data and capturing more when feasible. Moreover, we describe opportunities to embrace the unique student populations served throughout the state while still providing statewide performance statistics, and also increasing communication, dialog, and guidance between CSAC and consortia members in the future.

California Student Aid Commission Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

II. Introduction and Background

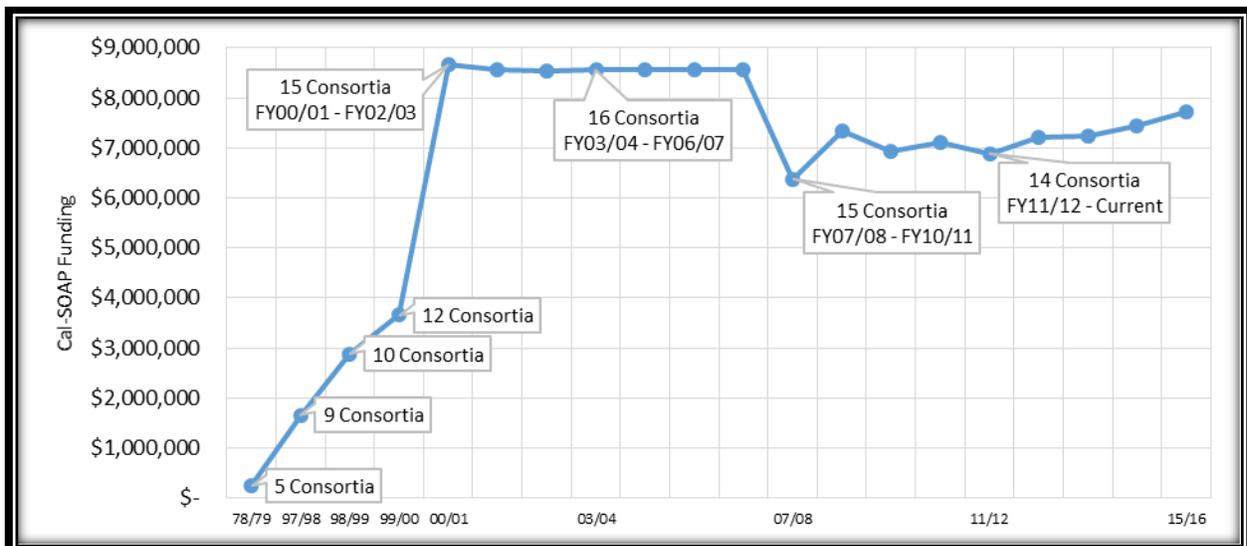
Under the oversight of the Student Aid Commission (CSAC) since 1978, the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) has been providing services intended to improve postsecondary opportunities for socio-economically challenged elementary and secondary school students. California Education Code Section 69561 stipulates that the Cal-SOAP program may target elementary, middle and high school pupils that are “from low-income families, who would be the first in their families to attend college, and who are from schools or geographic regions with documented low-eligibility or college participation rates.”

While the program’s goals are defined by statute, decisions on the specific types of Cal-SOAP services provided at the local level are made by 14 regional consortia, each with a governing board consisting of representatives from a variety of education areas, including local elementary, middle and high schools, school districts, community colleges, universities, and other educational agencies or programs.

Cal-SOAP Funding History

For the past nearly 40 years, the Cal-SOAP program has been supported by varying levels and types of funding sources. What began as a small \$250,000 grant awarded equally to five projects³ in Fiscal Year 1978-79, has evolved into a \$7.7 million program serving thousands of students in 14 regions across the state, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Cal-SOAP Funding History



Source: CSAC Prepared Funding and Budget History Documents (unaudited)

³ Original “Cal-SOAP” funded projects included: Central Coast, East Bay, San Diego, South Coast (last funded in 2003-04) and SUCCESS (rural communities in Solano County, last funded in 2006-07).

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

During its peak funding years, between Fiscal Years 2000-01 and 2006-07, Cal-SOAP's total allocation averaged approximately \$8.5 million annually. In Fiscal Year 2007-08, funding temporarily dropped to \$6.4 million when Student Loan Operating Fund⁴ (SLOF) program support ended and the program received only State General Fund monies. The following year, Fiscal Year 2008-09, through Fiscal Year 2014-15, Cal-SOAP no longer received State General Fund support; instead, Cal-SOAP received College Access Challenge Grant Program funding from the U.S. Department of Education. During Fiscal Year 2015-16, the program reverted back to being supported by the State General Fund with each consortium receiving between \$387,983 and \$1,093,992 in Cal-SOAP funding.

⁴ SLOF: Federal Family Education Loan Program revenue deposited into the State's SLOF.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

III. Answers to Evaluation Questions

CSAC, in conjunction with the Cal-SOAP Project Directors, identified ten questions to be answered by the program evaluation. In addition to addressing the questions below, Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting identified additional opportunities for Cal-SOAP program improvements; these opportunities are discussed at length in Section IV – Additional Evaluation Observations.

1. Why do Cal-SOAP projects have different amounts of state and local matching budgets? Is the minimum state funding grant adequate to fund a program?

While records to explain the rationale originally used to allocate the state funds among the consortia are no longer available, we found that funding amounts vary for a number of reasons. The original funding levels have been adjusted over the years; some locations closed, while others merged, and new ones opened. However, during the most recent four years, baseline budgets have changed little. Specifically, each consortium is allocated a “Cal-SOAP baseline” amount and additional allocations for CTE⁵ and MCS Outreach⁶ activities. Currently, the Cal-SOAP baseline minimum state funding varies between \$276,316 and \$580,866 per consortium, with the difference in funding commensurate with consortium size. Combined with CTE and MCS monies, the 14 Cal-SOAP consortia received between \$365,483 and \$1,093,992 for Fiscal Year 2015-16. In addition, state funding is matched by local consortia partners on a range of 1:1 to 1:1.5 ratio. Matching contributions are provided in form of cash, Work Study, or in-kind—with in-kind services representing the majority of the match. For these reasons, the budget amounts between Cal-SOAP locations vary widely.

Regarding the adequacy of the state grant to fund Cal-SOAP, state funding does not appear adequate to fully fund Cal-SOAP. For instance, while program staff and student tutors comprise Cal-SOAP’s human capital and represent the majority of Cal-SOAP funded expenses, state funding alone is not sufficient to cover staffing costs⁷. As shown in Figure 2, in Fiscal Year 2015-16, the consortia statewide budgeted \$13,032,090 for staffing costs, with state funding totaling only \$7,028,467⁸; the balance of these program costs were funded by local consortia partners that paid for approximately 58 percent of personnel expenses. In other words, the consortia could spend the entire Fiscal Year 2015-16 state allocation on staffing costs alone and still would need to supplement the expense with other funding sources.

⁵ CTE = Career Technical Education is \$1 million divided equally amongst the 14 consortia.

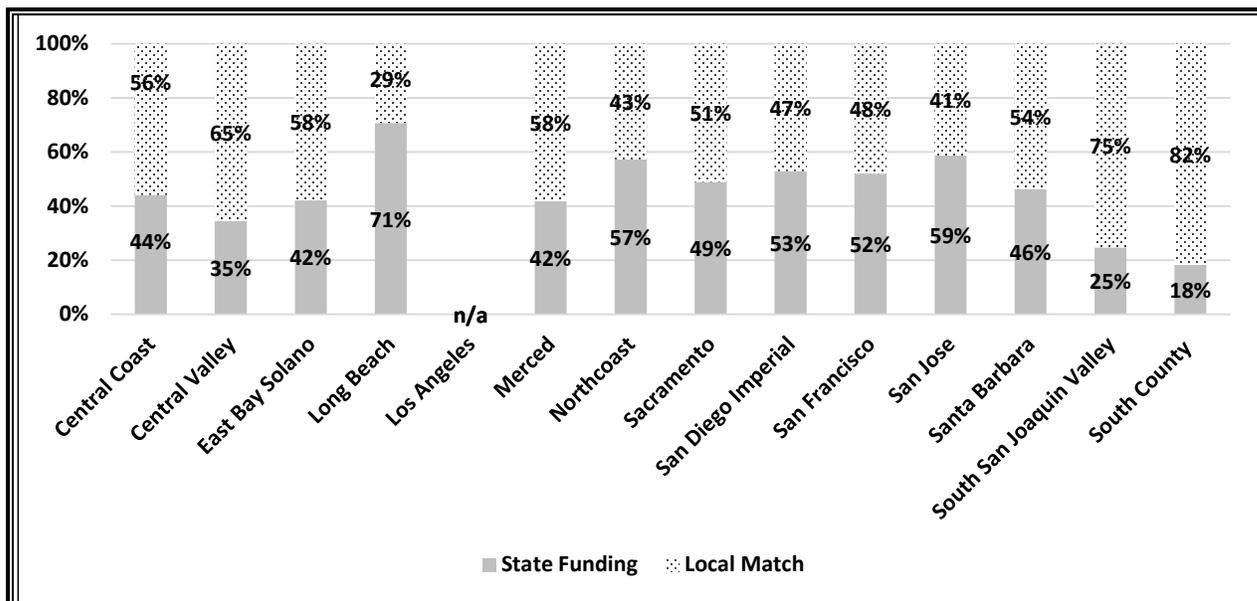
⁶ MCS = Middle Class Scholarship is \$500,000 shared amongst the 14 consortia based on consortium acceptance of MCS outreach and service requirements. Not all consortia participate in the program.

⁷ Staffing costs = Staffing and Benefits budgets derived from Fiscal Year 2015-16 Annual Program Plans from all consortia except for Los Angeles because no Los Angeles Annual Program Plan was available at time of review.

⁸ State funding = Fiscal Year 2015-16 state funding of \$7,721,000 adjusted for Los Angeles’ budget of \$692,533.

California Student Aid Commission Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

Figure 2: Cal-SOAP State Funding to Local Match Ratio for Staffing Cost, Fiscal Year 2015-16



Source: Fiscal Year 2015-16 Annual Program Plans for all consortia except Los Angeles because no Los Angeles Annual Program Plan was available at time of review.

With state funding remaining limited, over the years many consortia have become adept in leveraging state funding with other funding streams such as cash donations from school districts, non-profit organizations, and local businesses. Some consortia utilize community fundraising or actively apply for other grants to supplement state funding. Some examples of these efforts include an annual \$160,000 cash donation that the San Jose consortium secured from a local school district; the South County consortium regularly conducts local community fundraisers which historically raised between \$2,000 and \$4,000 annually from the local communities; the North Coast Cal-SOAP project partners with its Fiscal Agent to write grant applications which have resulted in receiving approximately three to four grants annually from non-profit organizations, local community groups, and state and federal agencies. However, the vast majority of these revenues are not guaranteed and amounts can fluctuate widely year-to-year. As a result, the consortia must adjust the number and frequency of services provided in accordance with the expected annual funding levels and, thus, any reductions to funding would directly result in a reduction in Cal-SOAP services provided in the region.

2. Do all Cal-SOAP projects provide the same services? If not, how and why do they differ?

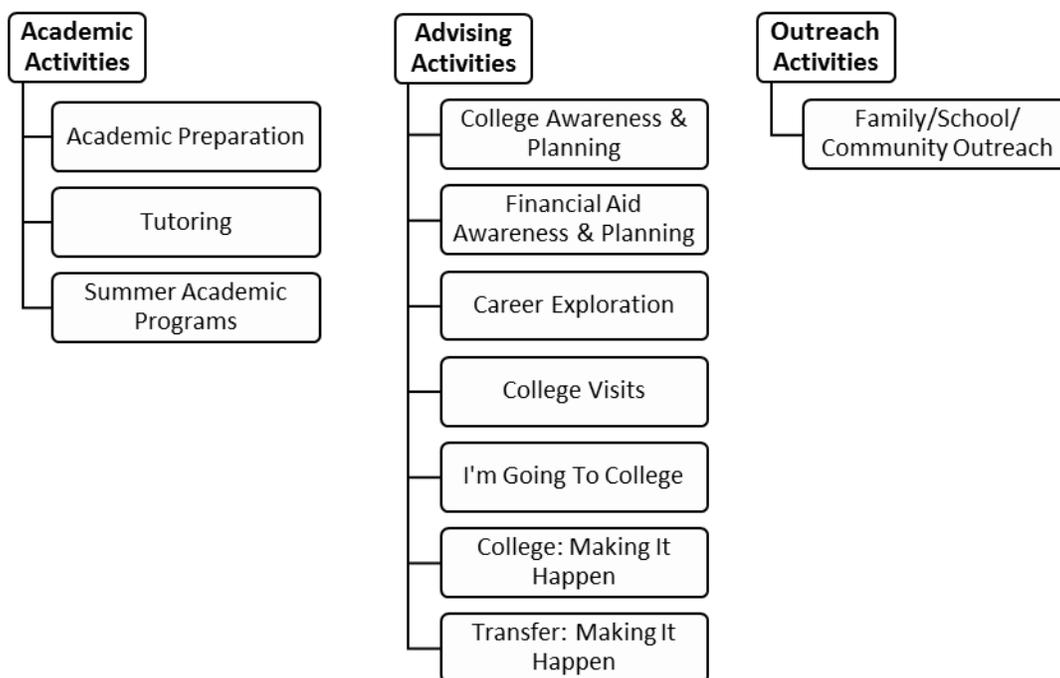
No, not all Cal-SOAP locations provide the exact same services. The difference in service offerings stems mainly from the wide range of geographical areas and population demographics each Cal-SOAP project serves. Services offered in an urban environment with a high student population density, multiple other student outreach organizations, and a significant number of English as a Second Language

California Student Aid Commission Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

(ESL) speakers within a small geographic area may significantly differ from a Cal-SOAP project covering a large, but mainly rural geographic area with limited additional outreach organizations.

However, as required by Cal-SOAP Policies⁹, Cal-SOAP consortia perform a variety of academic support, advising, and outreach activities in accordance with the overarching Cal-SOAP goal of providing greater postsecondary education opportunities for disadvantaged students. However, within these three main categories, each consortium provides a range of services that generally fall into 11 activity areas as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Cal-SOAP Service Offerings



For example, for those Cal-SOAP consortia that participate in the California Student Aid Commission’s Cash for College (Cash for College) program, a series of financial aid workshops to assist students in submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), would be grouped under the “Financial Aid Awareness & Planning” activity area. Although the Cash for College program has separate funding and reporting requirements from the Cal-SOAP program, several Cal-SOAP consortia partner with the Cash for College program to provide an additional avenue for student financial aid application assistance. To provide the Cal-SOAP services that best meet the local needs, each consortium has tailored the core programs to address the unique requirements of the region served, within the levels of available

⁹ Cal-SOAP Policies and Requirements Manual, August 2004, Chapter II, Section 6, as revised March 2015 per Cal-SOAP Operations Memo 2015-01.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

funding. As a result, actual services provided for each of these activity areas vary amongst the consortia.

For instance, we found that, while all consortia provide academic tutoring services, some focus tutoring to a sub-set of students such as tutoring in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classrooms or career/technical students only, while others provide tutoring services through drop in tutoring sessions conducted in homeroom or afterschool programs. Similarly, some consortia may choose to focus academic tutoring on “a-g” subject areas, while others may provide academic tutoring for a broader category of courses. Other types of services may relate to providing a “college experience;” for example, one consortium receives significant in-kind services from a local university and offers multi-day college site visits or on-campus summer academic programs since the university partner provides transportation, facilities, and meals that qualify as Cal-SOAP in-kind services. Another consortium, without this level of university partnership support, may only offer half-day college tours or none at all.

3. Are the Cal-SOAP projects operating effectively and efficiently? Are the processes, resources, and systems currently in place appropriate to ensure the effective and efficient operations of Cal-SOAP within the following levels: CSAC, fiscal agent, and consortium?

Through site visits with project staff at 13 Cal-SOAP locations visited, and conversations with CSAC Cal-SOAP leadership, it appears that all parties involved are very enthused and dedicated to fulfill the program’s mission. While assessing effectiveness and efficiency of all operations is difficult, we did observe a number of indicators suggesting positive impacts and results.

CSAC

CSAC and Cal-SOAP Project Directors recently began taking concrete steps towards addressing consortia concerns over inconsistencies in CSAC program leadership and the associated challenges of providing consistent, reliable, and definitive guidance on program issues or answers to program questions. Specifically, in addition to its current monthly conference call with the Project Directors, CSAC is in progress of formalizing revisions proposed by Project Directors to the Cal-SOAP policies and requirements manual (last officially updated in 2004), recently established a working group (comprised of Cal-SOAP Project Directors and CSAC information technology staff) to address functionality issues with the Cal-SOAP database, and held its first Project Directors conference in several years. CSAC plans to continue working with the Cal-SOAP consortia to facilitate sustained communication and leadership improvements.

Consortia

Consortia Cal-SOAP program staff are proud of their program and believe in its success as demonstrated in several instances where former Cal-SOAP “graduates”

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

have returned to work for the program as full-time advisors. Further, we noted a majority of Project Directors have been with the program for at least seven to eight years with some celebrating two decades of Cal-SOAP success in helping students attain postsecondary education. Consortia have also established good working relationships among consortia members including their fiscal agents. Also, as discussed in Questions #1 and #4, at the local level, Cal-SOAP locations seek to optimize operations despite their respective budgetary constraints.

Fiscal Agents

We observed that the consortia and their respective fiscal agents overall have good working relationships. Fiscal agents are afforded appropriate access to needed program budget and expenditure information to facilitate the fiscal oversight, accounting, and recording activities in support of the programs. However, in the recent past, state funding delays negatively impacted program effectiveness; while some fiscal agents have the ability to financially support Cal-SOAP administrative and program activities during interim funding periods others cannot or will not provide bridge funding. As a result, some consortia had to delay implementing Cal-SOAP programs at the beginning of the school year or hiring student staff until confirmation of the funds were submitted to their fiscal agent. Consortia have advised that recent CSAC efforts to improve leadership and communication amongst program stakeholders should mitigate this issue from affecting program effectiveness in the future.

4. Are the Cal-SOAP projects operating at full capacity given their individual funding levels?

Yes, based on discussions with Project Directors and our observations during site visits, it appears that each consortium is operating at full capacity given their individual funding level; however, state funding alone is not sufficient to operate a Cal-SOAP program.

In most locations, Cal-SOAP state funding is used to pay program staff salaries and fund the statutorily required 30 percent for student tutors and peer advisors. Without the matching contributions from consortium members, including free or reduced rent for office space, supplies, or accounting services provided by fiscal agents, Cal-SOAP consortia could not sustain the level of student service currently provided.

Additional discussion and specific recommendations on Cal-SOAP funding sources is detailed in Section IV of this report.

5. What data are available to monitor the performance of the Cal-SOAP projects? How can this data be improved?

Currently, the consortia report a variety of data elements and statistics to CSAC on a quarterly and annual basis. Existing data include numbers of Cal-SOAP students served, academic performance index (API) base, percentage of students receiving

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

free and reduced lunch, and percentage of students going to UC, CSU, or community colleges. While these data points provide general information regarding Cal-SOAP services, it is not as accurate, focused, sufficiently detailed, or consistently reported, as would be needed to measure the program's overall performance. Furthermore, the existing tool consortia utilize to record and report student data to CSAC, the Cal-SOAP statewide database, lacks key system functionality needed by Cal-SOAP Project Directors to effectively evaluate project performance.

CSAC and the Project Directors have started addressing these problems in early 2015, however data collection methodologies and data definitions still vary amongst consortia locations, thus, preventing an adequate standardized evaluation of Cal-SOAP projects' performance. For instance, some consortia base their college-going rates on data from self-reported senior surveys currently required by CSAC. These results would likely be less accurate than those of consortia who have access to the National Student Clearing House or CSAC's WebGrants 4 Students databases and base their college-going rates on data collected from those sources.

Additionally, we noted a wide variety of interpretation of data elements and "counting" protocol such as for "contacts" as well as services deemed "intensive." As a result, not only can data reported by a consortium year-to-year be inconsistent, but, also compromises the accuracy and reliability of "like" data among consortia across the state.

Thus, in order to provide meaningful results on Cal-SOAP's performance, a standardized performance measurement framework, that includes uniform definitions of data elements and counting protocols, is needed. With data counted and collected on a consistent basis, programs can track and compare specific inputs and outputs and also become sufficiently comprehensive to provide information to help address short and long-term program management. Over time, such data will allow each consortium, as well as CSAC, the ability to ascertain program outcomes and measure results and determine how well Cal-SOAP is meeting the primary mission and goals of helping socioeconomically challenged middle and high school students get into college.

Additional discussion and specific recommendations on Cal-SOAP performance data is detailed in Section IV of this report.

6. What would be the impact on the existing Cal-SOAP projects if some of their funding were to be reduced and reallocated to fund new Cal-SOAP projects elsewhere in the state?

Reducing or reallocating existing Cal-SOAP funding to fund additional Cal-SOAP locations will most certainly require current Cal-SOAP locations to cut back on current service offerings. As discussed in Questions #1 and #4, the consortia have

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

developed their service offerings based on the state funding as foundational support. Thus, Cal-SOAP funding provides minimum service levels and any reductions in state funding will directly result in fewer Cal-SOAP program staff, and ultimately limit the portfolio of programs and the number of students the consortia will be able to serve. If more consortia were to be added to the state's program, to avoid impacts to the existing programs, additional state funds would be required.

7. How do Cal-SOAP projects work with other outreach programs such as AVID, GEAR UP, TRIO, and UC's EAOP?

Each consortium works closely with other student career counseling, outreach and student services programs, such as the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), the Federal TRIO and the UC Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) programs offered throughout the state to minimize duplication of services to students. As part of on-going determinations of service needs, consortia work with the other outreach programs to identify existing service offerings at each consortia school and students who may be enrolled in multiple programs. In designing their programs, the consortia assess how to build on, leverage, or supplement offerings of others and may even pool resources with their outreach partners to coordinate larger events, such as career days or college tours, to minimize outreach costs.

8. Do the demographics of the students targeted by Cal-SOAP projects vary across projects? How do the projects determine which students to target? To which students do they prioritize services, if at all?

Yes, demographics of the student population is an important criteria used by consortia in determining the type of programs and groups of services to be served as also discussed in Question #2. Although the guiding statute requires that a student served by Cal-SOAP meets general provisions, such as qualifying as a low-income family, first in family to attend college, or from a school or geographic region with documented low-eligibility or low college participation rates, consortia also look to see how these groups are already served, whether other outreach programs already exists, or if the targets should be broadened or amended. Within this general population, the consortia typically do not "prioritize" services to specific demographics; rather, we noted that each consortium works with its schools to identify students they deem will most benefit from Cal-SOAP services. Most consortia have developed enhanced methodologies to further identify students in need of Cal-SOAP services, for example, one consortium targets low income students with a GPA between 2.0 and 2.5, while another consortium requires formal enrollment in Cal-SOAP "collegiate academies" for 7th grade students.

9. Do the projects encourage students to access particular pathways to postsecondary education rather than others? (Do they discourage certain pathways?)

California Student Aid Commission Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

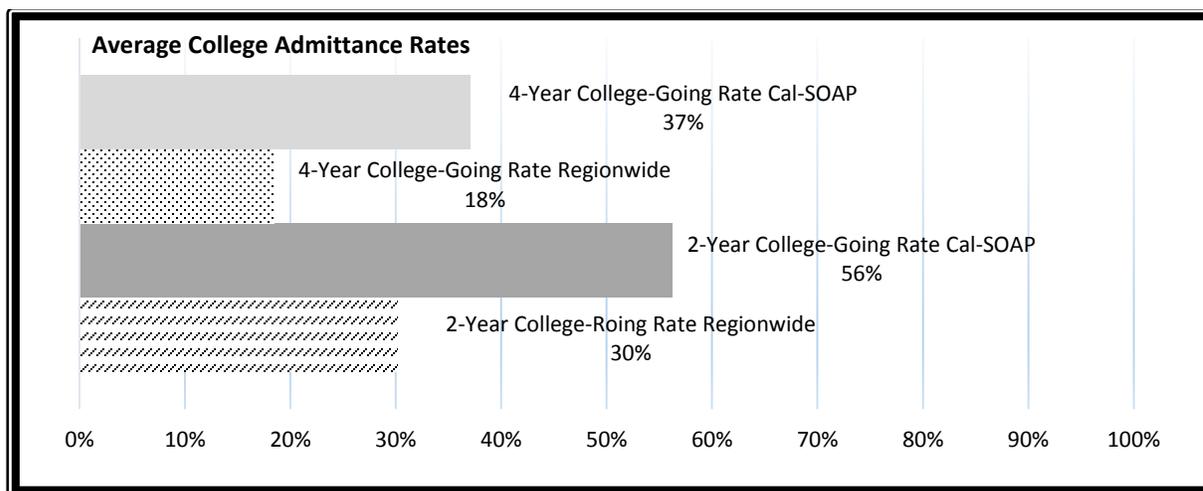
Cal-SOAP consortia do not encourage a certain pathway, but educate students on the full range of postsecondary education options available. Depending on individual students' academic achievement and interest, Cal-SOAP works with each student to identify the requirements needed to achieve enrollment in a 4-year university, 2-year community college, or trade/technical school. Thus, no specific pathway is discouraged.

However, we did note that programs use CSU and UC admissions criteria as a basis for guidance, even for those who are community college bound. Additionally, we found one Cal-SOAP consortium concentrated on vocational or community college programs, as the other non Cal-SOAP programs in the region already provide services with significant focus on the 4-year college track.

10. Are there any data to indicate whether students who accessed Cal-SOAP services were more likely to attend college? More likely to persist? More likely to transfer or receive a degree?

Using data Cal-SOAP consortia reported to CSAC, we found that on average for the 13 locations visited, Cal-SOAP students are more likely to attend college as shown in Figure 4 on the following page.

Figure 4: College-Going Rate Comparison, Fiscal Year 2014-15



Source: Consortia Annual Program Plans 2015-16 "Activity Reports" Section.

Specifically, the regionwide 4-Year College-Going rate is 18 percent compared to Cal-SOAP's 37 percent¹⁰. Similarly, for 2-Year Colleges, 56 percent of Cal-SOAP students attended a community college compared to 30 percent of students not receiving Cal-SOAP services.

¹⁰ Percentages reflect the average for the 13 Cal-SOAP locations included in this review. Los Angeles is not included.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

Although this consortia data demonstrates the positive impact of Cal-SOAP services related to attending college, it does not account for the wide range and often unrelated factors that may influence persisting to attain a degree versus dropping out. Data tracking Cal-SOAP students after commencement of college or technical school are not routinely captured. The Cal-SOAP mission, and the corresponding activities conducted to support that mission, is focused on outreach to high school (and occasionally middle school) students. Cal-SOAP has regular access to these students through their on-site presence at local high schools, outreach to parents in the community, and partnership with other outreach programs. However, Cal-SOAP has limited access to students' post-high school graduation and it is not a Cal-SOAP mandate to support students through post-secondary education¹¹. Cal-SOAP does not maintain the requisite on-campus presence, nor have partnerships been developed with outreach programs for college students. To track student activity past high school, consortia would need to maintain contact with the student participants throughout their college years. Such post-high school activities could not only retain on-going interaction with its Cal-SOAP students; but, post-high school to enable the Cal-SOAP program to continue its influence, support, and guidance towards persisting and completing a college degree. Since programs appear to be operating at capacity, such tracking would require additional resources or program reductions in other areas.

Additional discussion and specific recommendations on Cal-SOAP performance data is detailed in Section IV of this report.

¹¹ See report Appendix B for full text of California Education Code 69560 - 69566.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

IV. Additional Evaluation Observations

Cal-SOAP site visit observations, interviews with CSAC and Cal-SOAP program staff, fiscal agents, and partners, and review of Cal-SOAP Annual Program Plan and Year-End reports, suggest that all involved are dedicated to the program mission. Program components are focused on providing the best possible services to high school and middle school students to support and increase the number of students who pursue postsecondary education and to assist in maximizing the financial aid options available to them.

Although our observations, interviews, and report reviews indicate positive overall performance, we have identified opportunities for CSAC and the Cal-SOAP consortia to improve the program. These areas relate to enhancement to its data collection, methods for reporting and analyzing program activities, and adopting consistent definitions of key program metrics. Further, Cal-SOAP would benefit from additional dialog between CSAC and the consortia members to create more opportunities to share and support overall program improvements, including consistency in program message and implementation of policy.

A. Developing a Statewide Performance Measurement Framework

As described earlier, Cal-SOAP is fulfilling its mission to assist low income students entering college at rates greater than those experienced by students who do not utilize its programs and services. The 13 active consortia throughout California provide 11 key activities and services whose goals are to improve a student's success in entering a university, college, or trade school.

For CSAC and the consortia to further demonstrate the effectiveness of the Cal-SOAP program, a performance measurement framework addressing how all of its programs and services help meet its overarching mission is needed. Performance measurement can provide a wide range of benefits, beginning with assisting CSAC and the consortia in operating more efficiently and effectively, sharing best practices between and among consortia, optimizing the return on in-kind and CSAC funding, and supporting efforts to retain and perhaps increase state funding.

The development of a robust performance measurement framework is very doable, but not necessarily easy. It will require close collaboration between CSAC and the consortia to develop a consensus on many of its operations and activities. Collaboration is essential to a meaningful and functional set of key performance measures and the underlying indicators. Performance measures should be focused on the goals of the overall program and the objective of the underlying services. Once these are agreed to, the parties should create activity and service definitions and offerings, data to be collected and methodology for collecting the key data.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

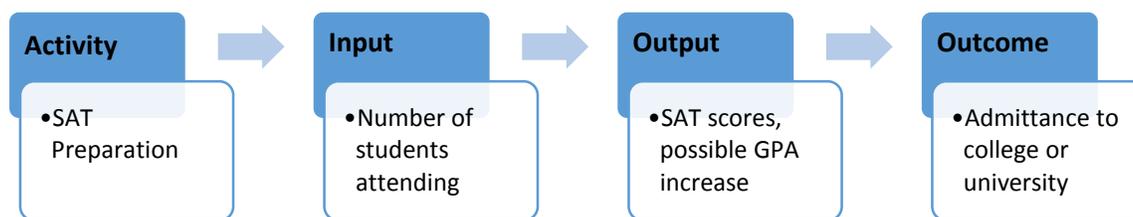
Performance measures ultimately should demonstrate how well the Cal-SOAP projects are doing, on a local and statewide level, whether or not they are meeting program goals, and to identify if and where improvements are necessary. Developing a performance measurement framework will ultimately aid Project Directors to make informed decisions about program offerings, possible areas of improvement, or whether service activities that are working extremely well should be expanded upon. Performance measures may be a combination of qualitative and quantitative elements; with the overall goal of determining how well a project is doing.

With a standard uniform framework for measuring performance in place, Project Directors and CSAC management – with data to interpret and evaluate – will be able to assess Cal-SOAP project activities uniformly, as well as allow for more precision in interpreting results. Ideally, performance measures should be developed in ways that will be most meaningful to those who must use or make decisions based on the chosen measures. Such a framework will allow CSAC and Cal-SOAP projects to measure, monitor, and communicate Cal-SOAP program vision and goals and make creative strategies actionable throughout each project.

Short-Term Performance Measurement

Currently, each consortium collects a variety of data that is used locally and reported to CSAC that can be utilized as a basis for a uniform performance measure framework. However, data element definitions and collection protocols are not uniform and measures using such data should be developed so that services offerings can be tracked and assessed. Also, some consortia collect more information than others. In the short-term, consortia should work in concert with CSAC and identify an initial set of key measures for each of Cal-SOAP's 11 activity areas. Collaboratively, the group should identify inputs, outputs, and possible outcomes for each activity area that lead to fulfilling Cal-SOAP's overall mission of increasing low income student college attendance rates.

To illustrate the steps in the process, we chose one of the 11 activity areas – SAT Preparation – as an example, beginning with Cal-SOAP's overall mission of increasing college-going rates and financial aid awareness.



California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

For all activities and services, the focus should always be on fulfilling the Cal-SOAP mission.

In addition to identifying data inputs, outputs, and outcomes, CSAC and the consortia should clearly define activities that qualify under a specific service area. For example, services currently provided under the “Financial Aid Scholarship and Workshop and/or Advisement” category, could range from an in-class general presentation on types of financial aid available to a more hands-on approach such as assisting individual students to complete and submit an actual application. Definitions should distinguish between generally served and intensively served students with specific criteria required in determining which students qualify as having been intensively served.

For these measures to be valuable and trackable year-to-year, each Cal-SOAP project will need to consistently collect and report on the agreed-upon data. Once data are available for several years, a baseline set of measures can be developed that individual consortium can use to monitor its progress and set realistic goals to improve service delivery.

Developing Consistent Definitions for Program Terminology

Cal-SOAP consortia perform a variety of activities intended to fulfill the program mission of increasing college going rates and financial aid opportunities for high school students. While each consortium delivers services uniquely, counting and identifying participants and services rendered requires consistent definitions and terminology for use throughout the consortia. In describing program activities the following variations in terminology definitions may occur: one consortium may define a “financial aid” workshop as one where a large group of students are provided details on available financial aid sources and the application process, yet another consortium may define a “financial aid workshop” as one where individual students are assisted with each step of the application process, culminating with the submission of an application. Clearly there is value to both types of activities, but the two offerings are not the same. For each consortium to assess its performance year over year, consistent definitions that accurately identify the type and level of services each consortium offers are essential so that data can be compared.

For instance, in comparing a monthly financial aid workshop provided by one consortium, CSAC cannot determine the difference or value of a monthly financial aid workshop conducted by another consortium in another region if there is no standard protocol as to what constitutes a financial aid “workshop.” One may be more extensive and serve fewer students, but may prove more effective in getting applications filed. However, a group presentation may be

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

a better vehicle for the demographics of another consortium. While both may have merit, they should have unique definitions and performance measures. This is also important for assessing year to year Cal-SOAP services as CSAC needs to understand the exact composition of consortia activities to understand which services may be most effective.

Other areas needing clarification include key terms such as workshops and seminars to assist in distinguishing an informational activity from a more hands-on type of activity, the consortia and CSAC may find that designating “workshops” as an event is strictly informational in nature; whereas “seminars” are designed to include activities such as one-on-one work with Cal-SOAP students resulting in the creation of a “product,” such as a college personal statement, or submission of college application, or financial aid forms.

Identifying and Detailing Data Collection Requirements

In addition to identifying and developing standard terminology and definitions to use when describing program activities, the measurement process also needs to link the data tracking to the types of services provided within an activity. For example, utilizing the idea that a “workshop” is more informational and a “seminar” more intensive in nature, then the types of data collected could be as follows:

Activity	Service Provided	Data Tracking
Workshop	General Information Presentation with Q & A Session	Attendance Sign-In sheet with student name and grade level.
Seminar	Application Completion Assistance including Personal Statement Preparation Advising	Student name, grade level, date of birth, colleges/universities applied to, current GPA.

Linking the minimum data collection requirements to the program activity type will help guide consortia on the type of data collection effort and tracking detail needed. Of course, if a consortium should choose to collect more than the minimum required data that decision can be made at the individual program level. Developing a solid framework of defining what program activities, performance measures or key indicators is a precursor to identifying the critical data that should be collected from each type of activity, service, or program. Once captured, that data will provide the basis for CSAC and each consortium to uniformly track progress, make informed decisions and report program success. Also important, this data can provide valuable guidance for operational planning and staffing, as well as budgeting Cal-SOAP funds.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

For any new services that do not clearly fit into the pool of existing defined activities, consortia should describe the service activity and obtain specific guidance from CSAC in determining how the activity should be categorized (e.g., academic, advising, or outreach,) defined (e.g., workshop or seminar,) and what data should be collected to support these Cal-SOAP activities.

Data Consistency Requirements

In the current approach to data collection and reporting, CSAC requires that each consortium submit specific data on funding streams, number of students served, types of activities provided, number of activities provided, number of schools served, and the participating school district student demographics. Although CSAC collects like program data from each consortium, the data provided by each consortium varies due to a range of collection methodology and sources, which make it difficult to reliably evaluate the consortia.

For example, each consortium reports the number of its students served that attend college; however, the information sources and collection methods vary significantly between consortia. Specifically, consortia gather this data through various methods, including utilizing the CSAC required, self-reported exit surveys completed by high school seniors, collecting copies of college acceptance letters, or, for those consortia with access, utilizing the National Student Clearinghouse service to verify student enrollment in college. The level of data reliability may vary widely depending on methodology deployed to collect the information. For example, the accuracy of college-going rates reported by a consortium that bases its data on a self-reported senior survey may be less accurate than a consortium that bases its college-going rates on data collected from the National Student Clearinghouse for several reasons. For instance, it is likely not all seniors would complete the survey, some may not reply truthfully, or the situation may change and ultimately not attend college.

To ensure consistency and accuracy of reporting information, CSAC should clarify data collection standards and develop clear definitions of data collection methods. The inconsistency in criteria utilized between consortia could affect the actual results reported in program evaluations.

Utilizing Currently Reported Data

Identifying performance measures and consistency in consortia data collection methods is key to evaluating program performance by applying performance measures and goals. Currently, consortia report a variety of data and statistics to CSAC on a quarterly and annual basis. While these reports provide CSAC with statewide data, CSAC has not yet developed baseline performance measures which could be utilized to determine the effectiveness of individual consortia. The information submitted to CSAC

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

report the numbers of Cal-SOAP activities provided and the number of Cal-SOAP student contacts; but this data does not lend to a meaningful evaluation of overall program effectiveness.

As previously stated, CSAC should first work with the consortia to determine success and identify meaningful performance measures. Once such measures are determined for reporting at the state level, CSAC should establish the specific type of data to collect, the method by which the data should be collected, and the frequency of data collection. Once these elements are set, baselines can be established for program services and outcomes and results assessed on an ongoing basis for the program statewide.

Performance Evaluation Based on Program Methods

We found a variety of program delivery methods at the consortia we visited. One common service delivery approach is the caseload method. The caseload approach is where consortia student staff are assigned a “caseload” of specific students from a particular participating school(s). Each of the student staff is assigned a set number of Cal-SOAP students, typically between 10-15 students, with whom they regularly meet to provide the gamut of Cal-SOAP services throughout their high school career. It is reasonable that if a consortium follows a caseload delivery approach comparing data year over year would reveal aspects of that unique service activity’s performance and outcomes. Alternatively, other consortia do not use the caseload approach, but conduct on-going outreach to the entire student population through group meetings and other broad public information type approaches. These activities may provide valuable information to a large number of students and parents, but should not be used to compare or measure against caseload programs.

Moreover, trying to compare or weigh the value of a consortium’s efforts that has identified the “caseload approach” as the best methodology for providing services to its students to one that conducts frequent, in-depth FAFSA application and submission workshops, with less focus on student services prior to junior and senior years, cannot be meaningful or relevant. Given the variety in service delivery approach (caseload method, frequency and depth of workshops, etc.) and the unique challenges faced by each consortium, conducting comparative performance evaluations between consortia may not provide accurate and productive information on consortia performance.

It is also important to note that each consortium bases its programs and services on the specific needs of students it serves due to demographic or regional differences. For instance, the programs at a consortium serving inner city students may vary from those that serve rural, agriculture-based

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

student groups. Consequently, efforts to evaluate performance or compare individual consortium against each other may not be reliable nor meaningful. Yet, comparing the performance of an individual consortium's year-over-year progress against its own baseline measures can be valuable for assessing progress and meeting internal goals.

Using this approach would base performance measures on the year-to-year achievement of individual consortium goals and outcomes, the consortia and CSAC can clearly evaluate the consortia's:

- Stability or growth/expansion in services provided
- Comparative analysis of college and financial aid application submission
- Analysis of service provided configuration against macro and micro performance indicators

Related to Cal-SOAP statewide performance reporting, to capture and track baseline performance data, CSAC and consortia should work together to develop policies and procedures which link consortia and annual reporting towards program improvements. Specifically annual reporting should include year-to-year evaluation of the reported information that indicate program strengths and weaknesses which can be utilized in developing and planning future years' activities.

In addition to improving consistency with data collection standards, there are improvements needed with the existing Cal-SOAP database, currently used to record, track, and report Cal-SOAP project data to CSAC. Specifically, Cal-SOAP Project Directors identified significant functionality issues which limit their ability to effectively and efficiently assess program performance, including limited ad hoc report generating capabilities and cumbersome database navigation processes.

Thus, until the Cal-SOAP database is fully functional, standardized data should continue to be recorded in systems currently used by the consortia such as access databases, Google drives, or excel spreadsheets. After all consortia collected two years-worth of data, results from Year 1 and Year 2 should be used to establish a baseline for statewide program reporting as well as develop future performance goals unique to each Cal-SOAP project.

Performance Measurement on a Go-Forward Basis

As described, not all consortia capture the same data or do so in a common format. Although CSAC can utilize current data to prepare meaningful performance measures, once the format and protocols are developed, all

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

consortia will need to begin gathering the needed data. This will ultimately result in performance measures that are consistent, accurate and meaningful.

While all consortia are collecting the requested data, CSAC should work with them to reconfigure and update the existing Cal-SOAP database to ensure it is functional for the consortia's day-to-day use, allows the consortia to generate ad-hoc reports, and enables CSAC and the consortia to collect and synthesize data for statewide reporting purposes.

B. Cal-SOAP State Funding is Used to Establish Minimum Service Levels But Maximizing Other Funding Sources Allows for Additional Service Offerings

While all consortia indicated that the strength of the program (particularly student staff retention) depends on reliable state funding, the programs also rely heavily on in-kind services from its consortium partners and alternative funding sources (see also answers to Question #1.) In terms of additional revenue streams, members receive funding through numerous avenues: school/school district cash donations, private sector/individual cash donations, local and federal grants, non-profit grants, and traditional fundraising activities, such as spaghetti feeds or raffles.

A consistent funding activity among all consortia is leveraging its board members to maximize discounted or free in-kind services. While all meet CSAC's required minimum 1:1 local match ratio, the ability of each consortium in generating additional revenues or in-kind contributions widely varies. We identified consortia that receive in-kind services from its consortium members to a level where they do not pay for building rental, use of office machines, computer laboratories and part-time staff. Alternatively, there are some consortia where the in-kind services received are more limited or reflect discounts rather than free services, such as paying less than market rates for rent. Additionally, there are locations where overhead rates for fiscal agent services are waived completely while there are other fiscal agents that assess overhead rates. The ability of a consortium to leverage its membership in-kind services is typically based on the overall commitment of its members to the Cal-SOAP program and the ability to develop lasting relationships with members, according to most Project Directors.

Not all consortia conduct fundraisers or apply for grants, while others do. In some instances, the consortium's Fiscal Agent may restrict or prohibit fundraising activities or has determined that efforts needed to complete grant applications are not a viable option for their region based on cost benefit assessments. However, in other instances, consortia have not attempted these alternative revenue streams due to lack of information. Specifically, one consortium advised that they did not realize that fundraisers were an

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

authorized funding alternative. Increasing communication between consortia on revenue streams utilized throughout the Cal-SOAP program, as well as consortia actively supporting one another with developing grant proposals or conducting community outreach for additional funds, may strengthen the foundation for program funding for the Cal-SOAP program as a whole.

Thus, we recommend that CSAC and the consortia should incorporate administrative practices and protocols which encourage and support Cal-SOAP projects maximizing benefits from alternative revenue sources. These practices may include providing grant writing training for project staff or identifying previously untapped community resources.

C. Efforts to Improve Cal-SOAP Administration Should Continue

For the past nearly 40 years since Cal-SOAP's inception, CSAC has been tasked with the program's administrative oversight. In that capacity, CSAC staff have served a valuable role in ensuring Cal-SOAP projects' overall compliance with statutes by reviewing required reports such as the APP or YE report, processing reimbursement requests, as well as providing general guidance on program administrative matters.

As Cal-SOAP grew and evolved over time, the consortia looked to CSAC to take on a greater leadership role and become more involved with program operations. Until recently, this program leadership and guidance was lacking which resulted in Project Directors unilaterally making decisions based on their interpretation of policies and procedures. Often, Project Directors would consult amongst themselves when questions to CSAC remained unanswered or guidance was not definitive.

We also learned that the delay in the development of formal Cal-SOAP policies and procedures by CSAC has led to several instances where CSAC would direct new Project Directors to their peers for not only advice, but guidance on how to manage and implement Cal-SOAP. Not only are procedures outdated and many are not fully formalized, generally there is no repository of historical data at CSAC. Moreover, institutional program knowledge is lost each time there is staff turnover.

However, over the past year, CSAC has made a concentrated effort to overcome these challenges. Cal-SOAP Project Directors identified greater responsiveness from CSAC with the addition of new staff and increased collaborations to address general program challenges. This improved partnership is evidenced by several initiatives currently underway. For example, CSAC held a Project Directors' in-person meeting at CSAC where all Project Directors had the opportunity to network and obtain information from CSAC on upcoming program changes. Project Directors found this kind

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

of information exchange beneficial as it allowed for greater in-depth discussion on program concerns or issues than the scheduled monthly telephone conference calls. In addition, CSAC has designated a team to answer program questions and strives to be more efficient in addressing Project Directors' concerns and need for guidance. We were also told that CSAC is in the process of hiring program staff who will be more fully dedicated to the program and its day-to-day operations.

Lastly, while CSAC realizes that program statutes require the establishment of a Cal-SOAP advisory committee, budget challenges and weak attendance led to its dissolution several years ago. However, as long as CSAC continues to foster two-way open communication with the consortia, program innovations and challenges are periodically shared, and CSAC stays committed towards improving the program's structure, the program should be able to function without the burden of a formal advisory committee. As such, we recommend that CSAC continue efforts to improve its guidance with Cal-SOAP program administration and facilitating communication among Cal-SOAP projects, as well as between CSAC and the individual Cal-SOAP Projects.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

V. Appendix A: Detailed Scope & Objectives

In September 2015, CSAC contracted with Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting (SEC) to conduct a comprehensive Cal-SOAP evaluation on the program's outcomes and effectiveness. CSAC set forth the following ten questions to guide the evaluation:

1. Why do Cal-SOAP projects have different amounts of state and local matching budgets? Is the minimum state funding grant adequate to fund a program?
2. Do all Cal-SOAP projects provide the same services? If not, how and why do they differ?
3. Are the Cal-SOAP projects operating effectively and efficiently? Are the processes, resources, and systems currently in place appropriate to ensure the effective and efficient operations of Cal-SOAP within the following levels: CSAC, fiscal agent, and consortium?
4. Are the Cal-SOAP projects operating at full capacity given their individual funding levels?
5. What data are available to monitor the performance of the Cal-SOAP projects? How can this data be improved?
6. What would be the impact on the existing Cal-SOAP projects if some of their funding were to be reduced and reallocated to fund new Cal-SOAP projects elsewhere in the state?
7. How do Cal-SOAP projects work with other outreach programs such as AVID, GEAR UP, TRIO, and UC's EAOP?
8. Do the demographics of the students targeted by Cal-SOAP projects vary across projects? How do the projects determine which students to target? To which students do they prioritize services, if at all?
9. Do the projects encourage students to access particular pathways to postsecondary education rather than others? (Do they discourage certain pathways?)
10. Are there any data to indicate whether students who accessed Cal-SOAP services were more likely to attend college? More likely to persist? More likely to transfer or receive a degree?

Specifically, CSAC defined 14 tasks, to be presented in 5 deliverables:

1. Reviewed statute and policy manual on the Cal-SOAP program.
2. Reviewed the most recent Annual Program Plans (AAP) for each Cal-SOAP consortium provided by CSAC.
3. Reviewed budget, activity and other data on the Cal-SOAP program provided by CSAC.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

4. Reviewed historical information including CPEC reports on the program as provide by CSAC.
5. Provide recommendations for measures that would show the effectiveness of the projects.
6. Conduct a pre and post conference call via telephone with all Project Directors as a group.
7. Visit and review each of the Cal-SOAP projects.
8. Provide recommendations on the content of the evaluation report.
9. Provide analysis and comment on the questions specified.
10. Provide analysis for determining if the program has been successful.
11. Develop conclusions on the success of the program.
12. Provide a draft report to CSAC staff and Project Directors for review.
13. Prepare a final written report.
14. Present the report at a regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

To accomplish the scope and objectives of this evaluation, SEC performed a variety of tasks, including, but not limited to reviewing performance data on Cal-SOAP activities not currently collected by CSAC, interviewing Cal-SOAP Project Directors, administrative staff, student staff, and Fiscal Agents. Furthermore, SEC identified and discussed additional areas for Cal-SOAP program improvements beyond the ten questions required by CSAC.

California Student Aid Commission
Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

VI. Appendix B: California Education Code Sections 69560 - 69566

69560. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) Lack of information about postsecondary educational opportunities and low achievement levels are primary barriers to a college education for students from schools that have low eligibility and college participation rates.
- (b) The Student Opportunity and Access Program, initiated in 1978 to increase postsecondary educational opportunities, has been successful in meeting its goals to increase the availability of information, improve students' access to higher education by raising their achievement levels, and reduce the duplication of services by coordinating outreach efforts.
- (c) The intersegmental consortium nature of the program has proven to be a highly effective mechanism in coordinating existing services and in fostering the cooperation of the various education segments involved.
- (d) An essential core of state funding for the program is required to maintain its intersegmental character, which has generated better communication, understanding, and teamwork resulting in an impact enhanced by the collective effort, while minimizing duplication of services in a geographic area.
- (e) The anticipated growth in the state's school age population indicates an increasing demand for services provided by the program to assist students to compete successfully for admission to postsecondary educational institutions.
- (f) Salaries for college students of low-income backgrounds to provide informational and tutorial help for students from schools that have low eligibility and college participation rates is a cost-effective method of increasing access and of providing student financial aid.

69561.

- (a) The Student Opportunity and Access Program is administered by the Student Aid Commission.
- (b) The Student Aid Commission may apportion funds on a progress payment schedule for the support of projects designed to increase the accessibility of postsecondary educational opportunities for any of the following elementary and secondary school pupils:
 - (1) Pupils who are from low-income families.
 - (2) Pupils who would be the first in their families to attend college.
 - (3) Pupils who are from schools or geographic regions with documented low eligibility or college participation rates.
- (c) These projects shall primarily do all of the following:
 - (1) Increase the availability of information for these pupils on the existence of postsecondary schooling and work opportunities.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

- (2) Raise the achievement levels of these pupils so as to increase the number of high school graduates eligible to pursue postsecondary learning opportunities.
- (d) Projects may assist community college students in transferring to four-year institutions, to the extent that project resources are available.
- (e) Projects may provide assistance to low-income fifth and sixth grade pupils and their parents in order to implement outreach efforts designed to use the future availability of financial assistance as a means of motivating pupils to stay in school and complete college preparatory courses.
- (f) Projects may provide assistance to low-income middle and high school pupils and their parents in order to implement outreach efforts designed to use the future availability of financial assistance as a means of motivating pupils to stay in school by promoting career technical education public awareness. Projects shall promote the value of career technical education, available career programs in public schools and postsecondary segments with sequenced courses beginning in high school and continuing into postsecondary education, and the resulting career opportunities.
- (g) 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:
 - (1) A nonprofit educational, counseling, or community agency.
 - (2) A private vocational or technical school accredited by a national, state, or regional accrediting association recognized by the United States Department of Education.
- (h) The commission, in awarding initial project grants, shall give priority to proposals developed by more than three eligible agencies. Projects shall be located throughout the state in order to provide access to program services in rural, urban, and suburban areas.
- (i) 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.
- (j) 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:
 - (1) The agencies participating in the project.
 - (2) The pupils to be served by the project.
 - (3) The ways in which the project will reduce duplication and related costs.
 - (4) The methods for assessing the project's impact.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

- (k) 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 pupils for postsecondary education.
- (l) Each project shall maintain within the project headquarters a comprehensive pupil-specific information system on pupils 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.
- (m) 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:
 - (1) Work with secondary school pupils.
 - (2) Are currently enrolled in a college or other postsecondary school as an undergraduate or graduate student.
 - (3) Have demonstrated financial need for the stipend.
- (n) Each project should work cooperatively with other projects in the program and with the commission to establish viable student services and sound administrative procedures and to ensure coordination of the activities of the project with existing educational opportunity programs. The Student Aid Commission may develop additional regulations regarding the awarding of project grants and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the individual projects.

69562. The Student Aid Commission shall establish a 12-member project grant advisory committee to advise project directors and the commission on the development and operation of the projects, and consisting of the following:

- (a) Three representatives of outreach programs, representing the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges, appointed by their respective governing boards.
- (b) One representative of private colleges and universities, appointed by the Association of California Independent Colleges and Universities.
- (c) One representative of the California Postsecondary Education Commission, appointed by the commission.
- (d) Two secondary school staff, appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- (e) Two persons representing the general public, one appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the other by the Senate Rules Committee.
- (f) Two postsecondary students, both appointed annually by the California Postsecondary Education Commission.
- (g) One college campus financial aid officer, appointed by the commission.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Opportunity and Access Program Evaluation

69564. Allocation of any funds appropriated for purposes of this article shall be limited to those consortia meeting requirements of this article who 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.

69565. The initial grant for a proposed new project in an area that has demonstrated need for services provided by the Student Opportunity and Access Program may be utilized for planning and development. Full project grant funding shall be allocated when the consortium meets the criteria established in Section 69561.

69566. It is the intent of the Legislature that funding for the purposes of this article be appropriated in the annual Budget Act.