

Action/Information Item

Governance and Monitoring Committee

Consideration of State Legislative Principles for 2008-09

The Committee is asked to review the proposed annual Legislative Principles for the second half of the 2007-08 legislative session which will continue into the 2008-09 academic year. Commissioners and Commission staff may utilize the adopted Legislative Principles in developing positions on legislation and during budget and other policy discussions to convey general Commission policy positions.

While these principles will be used to guide staff and Commissioners in regards to legislation, it is important to note that the Commission has discussed its desire to develop a new long-term strategic plan. If necessary these principles may be revisited as the strategic plan is developed and in light of the 2008-09 budget.

Recommended Action: Review, discuss, revise, and approve the proposed principles.

Responsible Staff: Steve Caldwell, Chief
Governmental and Public Affairs
Division

**STATEMENT OF
LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES FOR 2007-08
(2nd Year of the 2-Year Session)**

The mission of the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) is to make education beyond high school financially accessible to *all* Californians. The Commission's goal is to ensure all California students learn and apply for benefits with the Cal Grant Program and other specialized aid programs the Commission administers. The Commission serves the public interest by providing quality financial aid services at a reasonable cost to those students who need financial assistance to attend a college or university.

It is essential that the Commission collaborate with the Legislature and the Administration to ensure that the Cal Grant program and other specialized aid programs are successful by conducting Cal Grant promotional events, participating in, and supporting the Commission's mission. The continued commitment from the State to improve the availability and amount of financial aid is crucial to ensure educational access for all California students. This commitment strengthens the state's economic well-being by educating California's future workforce.

LEGISLATIVE OBJECTIVES

The Commission will work to increase and expand the support of the Legislature and the Executive branch for the following:

- The Cal Grant Entitlement and Competitive Programs
- All Specialized aid programs
- Cal-SOAP, Public Awareness, and Cash for College programs
- Commission/ EDFUND's partnership
 - Strengthen and improve the opportunities offered through the Commission and EDFund model.

LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

Recognizing the critical need to maintain Legislative and Executive support for postsecondary educational opportunities, the Commission adopts the following general statement of principles to guide staff in consideration of legislation and related policy issues:

- Foster Educational Access and Affordability
- Ensure the Availability of Information on Educational Opportunities
- Preserve the Flow of Financial Aid
- Ensure Adequate Support and Flexibility for Commission Operations

Each of these principles is discussed in further detail below.

The guiding principles and objectives should be reviewed at the beginning of each legislative session to ensure they continue to be applicable, valid, and supportive of the Commission's mission.

FOSTER EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

The Commission and the State should advocate for increased higher education opportunities for all California students. The Commission accomplishes this as follows:

- Encouraging the expansion of financial aid to the growing number of needy California college students as the cost of completing a postsecondary education continues to rise.
- Cultivating legislative and budget actions that protect, strengthen, and increase the state's General Fund commitment to student financial aid.
- Encouraging continued bipartisan support for funding of statutory growth in the Cal Grant programs and for continued access to affordable student loans administered through EDFUND.
- Promoting expanded educational and transfer opportunities for students transferring from community colleges to four-year colleges.
- Supporting legislation that will enhance the benefits to those participating in state or federal tuition savings plans that encourage saving while offering tax relief incentives, such as the ScholarShare Program.

FOSTER EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY - FUNDING OBJECTIVES FOR THE CAL GRANT PROGRAM

The Commission will advocate the expansion of the Cal Grant program and for increases in the value of all Cal Grant awards to help defray the cost of obtaining a postsecondary education. The Commission accomplishes this as follows:

- Providing continuous educational opportunities by adopting budget principles, which intend to, at a minimum, preserve the Cal Grant Entitlement and Competitive Program's eligibility requirements, preserve the value of the award, and maintain the current number of awards.
- Pursuing a state budget that is supportive of access and institutional choice through the Cal Grant Program.
- Advocating for funds that increase the number of competitive Cal Grant awards for qualified non-recipient students.
- Supporting full fee funding for Cal Grant students at the public universities and a maximum Cal Grant award that supports the ability of students to choose to attend a private university.
- Continue to help students fund their unmet financial need through low-cost loans under the federal student loan program.

ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Commission should work to expand and strengthen its early outreach efforts throughout the State. The Commission accomplishes this as follows:

- Promoting the availability of information on college educational opportunities for all California students and families.
- Promoting policies that provide information and guidance to students and their families on alternative methods for financing a college education.

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- Providing the support needed to maximize the effectiveness of the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP).
- Participating in the CSAC sponsored annual Legislative Briefing Day and Cash for College Program Kick-Off.
- Working in coordination with our partners in the financial aid community.

PRESERVE THE FLOW OF FINANCIAL AID

The Commission should promote the uninterrupted flow of student financial aid to enable students to achieve their educational goals. The process of applying for and receiving student aid should be as simple as possible for students and their families, educational institutions, and other program participants. The Commission accomplishes this as follows:

- Advocating continued enhancements and improvements to the Grant Delivery System to promote transparency and ease of use in the system while maintaining speed and accuracy.
- Advocating federal and state actions that result in a streamlined application process for California students.
- Advocating policies that promote the cost-effective and timely administration of student financial aid programs.

ENSURE ADEQUATE SUPPORT AND FLEXIBILITY FOR COMMISSION OPERATIONS

The Commission should ensure that its administrative functions are sufficient to fulfill its essential mission and responsibilities. The Commission accomplishes this as follows:

- Administering its programs effectively and efficiently; expanding the use of advanced technological services and streamlined operations; providing high quality financial aid services to its customers and Californians at large; and retaining a qualified, professional workforce.
- Preserving the opportunity established through EDFUND (AB 3133, Chap.961, Stat.1996), as well as the authority to strengthen and improve the opportunities offered through the Commission and EDFund model (AB 2122, Chap. 657 and SB 1108, Chap.216, Stat. of 2004).

PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

During the legislative session, the Commission should support these legislative principles by taking the following actions for proposed legislation at Commission meetings as appropriate:

Neutral or No Position

- The Commission has conflicting votes or
- A bill that is not within the scope of the Commission's responsibility or would not impact the Commission's operations or procedures.

Support

- Supports the Commission's mission and principles.

Neutral if Amended, Support if Amended, or Oppose unless Amended

- The Commission's position would change if recommended amendments are made to resolve implementation or policy concerns. This position should indicate which concerns must be resolved before the Commission would change its position.

Oppose

- A bill that is in conflict with the Commission's mission and principles; it cannot be administered; it is too costly and burdensome to the Commission, the students, and schools.

Staff will draft an objective analysis of all legislative bills that affect the Commission. All positions will be in a "pending" status until the Commission has the opportunity to review the legislation and analysis and take an official position.

Staff will request the Commission's involvement during the legislative session as the opportunity arise, including but not limited to:

- Discussions related to the January Governor's Budget, 2-year bills and new proposals beginning in January.
- The Commissioners should participate in the CSAC sponsored annual Legislative Briefing Day.
- Commissioners should work with CSAC staff to arrange visits with member offices to promote the Mission and advocate for the passage of Commission supported legislation.
- The Commissioners should also work with legislative budget committee staff to preserve the Cal Grant program and current level of funding for Commission operations.
- Commission staff will develop and provide Commissioners with an advocacy binder to aid the Commissioners in communicating Commission policy and messaging.