
4.5

Action/Information Item

Outreach Committee

Cal SOAP Advisory Committee Report

The Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee met on June 17, 2005 to discuss various program matters. R. W. Hicks, the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee Chair, will present a summary report of the committee meeting. The Chair will also present a policy issue and committee recommendation that may affect student eligibility for Cal-SOAP services. The policy recommendation and background is summarized in the enclosure.

Recommended Action: Consider the policy issue and take appropriate action.

Responsible Staff: R. W. Hicks, Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee Chair

Kim Taylor, Manager
Outreach Unit

California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP)
 Summary of Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee meeting held June 17, 2005

- Outreach Manager, Kim Taylor, reported on two projects currently underway:

Cal-SOAP Site visits: Compliance Manager Charles Wood is following up and confirming that the projects have implemented corrections or adjustments accordingly, in response to compliance review findings. Kim Taylor is interviewing each Project Director and collecting information about how each project operates, how they collect their data, and the state of their physical environments. Site visits will continue through 2005 and staff will produce a report in early 2006.

Cal-SOAP Database Improvement Project: During the 2005-06 year staff will focus on the Cal-SOAP database and determine what changes will improve data collection and report production.

- Committee members discussed the student eligibility criteria for Cal-SOAP services and developed a policy recommendation that would change the definition of 'first in the family to attend college.'
- Executive Director Diana Michel gave a briefing on the current statewide budget issues that could affect state spending next year and that could potentially affect the Cal-SOAP budget. Director Michel also spoke about the CSAC/EdFund relationship and commented on how we are working to resolve the issues of roles and responsibilities between our two organizations. Director Michel spoke about steps the Project Directors could take in helping to publicize the important work of the program.
- Committee members reviewed and discussed several reports submitted by CSAC Staff. The reports included:
 - Year-End Report status – showed the current Cal-SOAP reports submission status
 - Matching Resource Contribution Summary - a 3 year history of the matching resources contributions
 - 2003-2004 Matching Resource Contributions
 - 2004-2005 Remaining Funds, as of May 25, 2005
- Members agreed to Staff's recommendation to fund the Cal-SOAP projects for 2005-06 fiscal year at the same levels as they were funded for the 2004-05 fiscal year.

California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP)

As indicated in the Tab cover sheet, the Cal SOAP Advisory Committee developed a policy issue and committee recommendation that may affect student eligibility for Cal-SOAP services. The policy recommendation and background are summarized below:

Current Cal SOAP eligibility criteria and policy:

In accordance with Education Code Section 69561, in order to receive Cal-SOAP services a student must meet the following criteria:

Be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen; **and**

Be an elementary or secondary school student; **and**

Be low-income, **or**

Be the first in his or her family to attend college, **or**

Be from a school or geographic region with documented low-eligibility or college going rates.

The Cal-SOAP Policies and Requirements manual currently defines ***“first in the family to attend college”*** as a student whose parents or siblings never attended college.

Advisory Committee Recommendation:

The Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee recommends the following change:

For purposes of Cal-SOAP eligibility first in the family to attend college means, a student for whom neither parent completed a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college.

Committee Discussion:

The Advisory Committee made the following points in support of its recommendation:

- Some Committee members felt that only a parent’s completion of a four year degree would provide a strong enough example to influence their children to achieve the same or greater. This broad interpretation would in turn provide the most support for achieving the Commission’s goal of fostering a college going attitude in California.
- Siblings should not be considered in the definition of ‘first in family to attend college’ because the sibling relationship is not a dependable information resource to the student.
- The Project Directors are concerned that under the current definition of ‘first in family’ they may have to deny services to students who have a sibling enrolled in college.
- The federal TRIO programs use the term ‘first generation’ and define it to mean neither parent completed a four-year degree.
- Committee members felt the broadest interpretation would allow the largest number of students to be eligible for Cal-SOAP services.
- Students who are not low-income and who do not attend schools or live in a region of low college going rates, and who would only qualify through the ‘first in family to attend’ criteria,

may not be eligible for Cal-SOAP services if their parents have a trade or technical degree from a proprietary school or Community College.

Staff Response

To support the proposed change in the definition of “first in the family to attend college” the Commission would need to pursue a statutory language change through the legislative process. In relation to current law, the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee recommendation takes Cal-SOAP eligibility beyond the statutory scope. While some pre-college program statutes use the term ‘first generation’ to target services to those families where the parents have limited or no post-secondary educational experience, Cal SOAP statutes use the term ‘first in their family to attend college’ to specifically target families that have no members who have any post-secondary experience. Through a statutory language change, the Commission could broaden the definition and change the scope of the eligibility criteria.

We currently have insufficient information to determine how many students may not qualify for Cal-SOAP services under the “first in the family to attend college” criteria alone. Indications are the number would be very few. The vast majority of students who receive Cal-SOAP services qualify as low-income or are from a low eligibility or low college going rate school or region.