

Exhibit 16

Information/Action Item

Presentation on High School Graduation Certification

At its February 19-20, 2015 meeting, the Commission directed staff to provide information on the high school graduation certification process for the High School Entitlement Cal Grant awards. Several updates on this process have been reported through the Executive Director's report, including staff's efforts to reduce the number of students withdrawn for not meeting the certification requirement.

Background

As stated in the California Education Code (§§ 69433.9 (2)(3), 69434(b)(8), 69435.3(a)(8)), all students offered a Cal Grant award under the High School Entitlement Program must graduate from high school.

High school graduation requirements can be completed by:

1. Receiving a high school diploma and passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE); or
2. Passing the General Education Development (GED) Test; or
3. Passing the California High School Proficiency Exam (CHSPE)

The GED and CHSPE are considered high school graduation equivalents and do not require taking and passing the CAHSEE. In most cases, students fulfill the graduation requirement by obtaining their high school diplomas and passing the CASHEE.

Prior to 2007-08 academic year, the high school graduation was based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) which was completed prior to the student's graduation. Beginning in the 2007-08 academic year, the Commission implemented a high school graduation verification process to allow students to self-certify their high school graduation due to the new high school exit exam requirement. Students were required to verify their high school graduation through a self-certification form (see Exhibit 16.1.). This process was updated during the 2008-09 academic year to allow students to self-certify through their WebGrants for Students accounts. In addition, colleges and high school campuses could certify an offered awardee's high school graduation through WebGrants.

Under Article V, Section D of the Institutional Participation Agreement (IPA), the Commission acts as the central repository of high school graduation confirmation received from a variety of sources and places high school entitlement offered awardees on hold until their high school graduation is confirmed. Under Article IV, Section B of the IPA, institutions are required to (1) confirm that the offered awardee meets eligibility and program requirements including, but not limited to student self-certification and (2) resolve any conflicting information prior to disbursing any Cal Grant funds.

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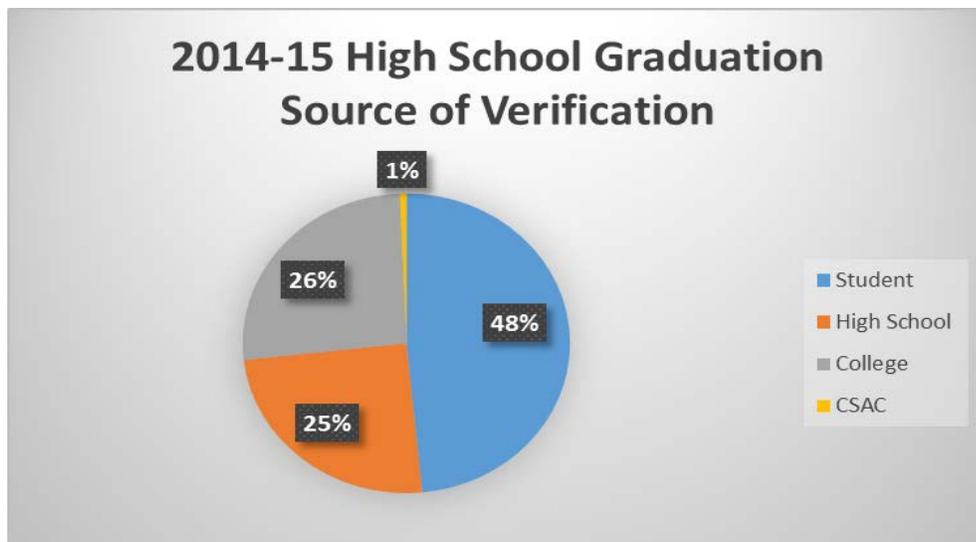
High School Graduation Certification Process

The Commission must obtain certification that the high school offered awardee has graduated from high school on/or after the actual high school graduation has taken place. Until then, the Cal Grant Entitlement award offer, will be tentative and placed on-hold until this requirement is satisfied. Each year this process begins in May and continues through December. The hold is released after high school graduation confirmation is received from any of the sources.

Many institutions must confirm high school graduation before admitting students to their campuses. A WebGrants opt-out feature is in place to allow those campuses to remove the hold for those students whose high school graduation is confirmed. Students who attend campuses that do not collect or confirm high school graduation, are required to self-certify to remove the hold from their account. Chart 1 below displays the sources used in certifying the high school graduation for 99,332 high school Entitlement offered awardees for the 2014-15 academic year, to date.

The current process in WebGrants allows high school counselors or district offices to certify the high school graduation for their students. Staff is working to improve the submission process for high school graduation confirmation for all graduating high school seniors.

Chart 1



Communications to Offered Awardees

As High School Entitlement offered awardees are notified of their Cal Grant offers, they are informed of the high school graduation requirement and what steps they need to take. The first reminder notification is sent to students in May allowing them to self-certify high school graduation in WebGrants for Students. Follow-up communications are sent to remind students who continue to have a hold on their Cal Grant award offers. The students are warned that their awards will be withdrawn if the high school graduation is not certified.

California Student Aid Commission

Graduation Data from California Department of Education

During the 2013-14 spring term, staff partnered with the California Department of Education (CDE) to match high school graduation information for 17,000 high school entitlement offered awardees on hold. Of the 17,000, 13,000 high school graduations were confirmed. This match reduced the number of offered awards that are withdrawn for not having their high school graduations confirmed.

Staff is currently working with the CDE to confirm the high school graduation for those students who are on hold for the 2014-15 academic year. The CDE will analyze the data match request and determine the next steps for us to take. Meanwhile, another reminder will be sent to approximately 30,000 students to self-certify their high school graduation if they are enrolled and attending an eligible Cal Grant institution.

Staff will also be exploring ways to increase the number of certifications of high school graduation, thus reducing the number of offered awards that are withdrawn for lack of certification. This is all the more significant in light of the increase in students eligible for High School Entitlement awards as a result of AB 2160 (Ting) (Chapter 679, Statutes 2014), which requires school districts to submit GPAs for high school seniors electronically to the Commission, and will be implemented in the 2015-16 academic year.

Reasons for Not Certifying High School Graduation

Of the 138,566 High School Entitlement Cal Grant awards offered for the 2014-15 academic year, 108,039 have certified their high school graduation, including GED and test scores. There are several factors that could contribute to students not certifying their high school graduation including:

1. Student not fulfilling high school graduation requirements.
2. Student not attending college.
3. Time gap between being awarded and completing all high school graduation requirements.

When high school graduation certification goes unverified for approximately one year, the award offer is withdrawn.

Responsible Person(s): Catalina Mistler, Chief
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High School Graduation Certification Form For the Entitlement Cal Grant Program

Attention: Confirmation of your high school graduation is required or no Cal Grant payments can be released. You can certify this online at <https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov> or at www.webgrants4students.org.

Earlier this year the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) offered you an Entitlement Cal Grant to help pay for your college expenses. Prior to receiving your Entitlement Cal Grant, you must submit confirmation of your high school graduation to the Commission. Use this form to verify that you have graduated from high school and meet this requirement for your Cal Grant. Read the information on the reverse side to help you complete this form correctly.

First Name	MI	Last Name	Social Security Number or CSAC ID or DREAM ID (Please circle one)
Address	City	State	Zip Code
Email Address:			
Fall 2014 College of Attendance:			

Step 1 Please check the box of the statement that best fits your educational status.

A	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have completed all of my high school requirements, and graduated.
If you checked A, above, please fill in the items below.		
Month and year of graduation: _____		
Name of high school or agency: _____		
City, state, country of high school: _____		
Or		
B	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have passed the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE). Issue Date: _____ <i>Please note that the CHSPE is not the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)</i>
Or		
C	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have passed the General Education Development (GED) Test. Issue Date: _____
Or		
D	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not meet any of the three statements above.

Step 2

<p>Student Certification: By signing the certification below, I am affirming that I have completed all of my high school graduation requirements, including passing the CAHSEE exam if required by my school. Or, I have passed a high school equivalency test such as the California High School Proficiency Examination or the General Education Development (GED) test. I understand that it is illegal to report false or misleading information. I have read the information printed above and certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the information above is true and correct.</p>	
Signature	
Day time telephone number	Date

See reverse side for more information

High School Graduation Certification Form For the Entitlement Cal Grant Program

Where do I submit my high school graduation certification?

Please submit this form to the address at the bottom of this page or submit it online at www.webgrants4students.org.

What does completing all graduation requirements mean?

Completing all high school graduation requirements means you have passed all required coursework and passed any required examinations, including the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), if required. When leaving high school, graduates would have been given a diploma, not just a "Certificate of Completion." If you are unsure, please contact your high school.

What if I don't have a diploma but I do have a graduation equivalent?

Instead of graduating, you may have taken and passed the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE) or the General Education Development (GED) Test. A passing score on either one of these tests is considered "the equivalent of high school graduation" and satisfies the high school graduation requirement necessary for a student to participate in the Entitlement Cal Grant program.

What if I have not graduated from high school or do not have a graduation equivalent? What can I do?

You are not eligible to receive Entitlement Cal Grant benefits if you have not graduated from high school or achieved the equivalent. However, state law gives potential Entitlement Cal Grant participants until December 31 of the award year to complete the high school graduation requirements. If you have not yet graduated, but expect to graduate prior to December 31 of the award year, keep this certification form and submit it after you have completed all your graduation requirements. If you have not graduated from high school, or achieved the equivalent, by December 31 of the award year, this Cal Grant offer is void. You would have to reapply next year by the March 2 application deadline.

This certification can be completed online at www.webgrants4students.org.

If you have questions or need additional information about your Entitlement Cal Grant award, please contact the California Student Aid Commission by phone at (888) 224-7268 or by email at studentsupport@csac.ca.gov

Mail this completed form to:

California Student Aid Commission
Grant Programs Operations
PO Box 419028
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9028