

# Item 18

## Information Item

### Update on Outreach plans for 2016-17

---

This item provides an update on outreach activities for the 2016-17 academic year. Several federal changes in the financial aid process will affect the California Student Aid Commission's (CSAC) 2016-17 outreach activities, training opportunities, processing plans, and other key areas. One of CSAC's roles is to provide financial aid program information and outreach services to California students encouraging families to apply for financial aid to make post-secondary education financially accessible.

To qualify for most federal and state financial aid programs, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or in California, the California Dream Act application for undocumented students. The 2016-17 FAFSA and California Dream Act Application became available for students on January 1, 2016, for the 2016-17 academic year. The Commission's Cash for College program has been providing workshops to assist families in filling out these applications since the first week of January. Approximately 900 workshops are scheduled and continue through the March 2 deadline.

Under the statutory March 2 deadline for Cal Grants, Middle Class Scholarship and other institutional aid and under the current FAFSA application cycle that began on January 1, students and their families currently have only 2 months to complete the FAFSA or Dream Act applications. They have even less time to learn whether they are eligible for Cal Grants and other financial aid and weigh their options among the colleges they may be able to afford.

As discussed in Item 16, beginning with the 2017-18 process, the FAFSA will be available to students and families on October 1, 2016, and they will use their 2015 tax information. The new deadline is designed to provide students and families with more time to complete the FAFSA, to learn whether they are eligible for financial aid, and to plan for and make informed decisions based on institutional costs and the amount of financial aid that may be available to them. These federal changes will require significant changes in CSAC outreach, training and award processing operations.

Staff will work within CSAC and with our external partners to explore the best and most efficient ways to provide assistance to students and families on the new FAFSA application process. Currently, High School Counselor Workshops occur in October and November. With the upcoming earlier FAFSA application process, staff may need to begin the high school counselor trainings in spring and continue them through the year.

**CSAC outreach activities:** Since the November Commission meeting, staff has participated in Cal Grant Day at CSU Maritime Academy on November 20, 2015, and bilingual staff worked in the phone bank hosted by Univision on January 20, 2015.

Commission staff will participate in the Steps to College event with the Consulate General of Mexico and the Black College Expo/Nat'l College Resource Foundation in Los Angeles on February 6, 2016 as well as the Black College Expo in Oakland on February 16, 2016.

## California Student Aid Commission

The annual KCRA 3 Cal Grants Day will be held on February 16, 2016 in Sacramento from 4:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. staffed by many CSAC employees, colleagues, and other volunteers to answer Cal Grant and other financial aid calls.

Staff has been working to improve outreach and information available to members of the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community. These efforts include reaching out to elected officials, various youth organizations and seeking invitations to present at the San Gabriel Valley Youth Summit (serving API students in the Los Angeles area) and the Lu-Mien Student Conference (serving Hmong Students in the Sacramento area).

**Cash for College:** Cash for College Workshops are currently held beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> and through March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Staff is exploring and will consider feedback from the PPY workgroup process to determine the best and most efficient use of Cash for College resources and volunteers in light of the expanded application window starting on October 1, 2016. The workshop period could begin on October 1, 2016 and continue through March 2, 2017. In 2015, 804 workshops were held over the January 1-March 2 two-month period and approximately 900 are scheduled to occur by March 2, 2016. With an additional three months, there is potential for this number to increase significantly in 2016-2017. This is a great opportunity for CSAC and Cash for College staff and volunteers to reach out to more students and families to inform them about financial aid, answer questions, and assist with completing and filing applications. However, additional resources have not been provided to expand the Cash for College program.

Commission staff is very thankful for the many Cash for College partnerships that have been established through the years with various community organizations and programs. Through the RCOs and partnerships, Cash for College has become a very effective network of well-trained, paid and volunteer workers helping make education beyond high school financially accessible for California students. Commission staff has worked diligently to coordinate Cash for College workshop development, to improve student access to local workshop information and to make training tools available to promote Cash for College events and the work of our partners. Staff has also attended local volunteer training sessions and Cash for College workshops.

**Cal SOAP:** The consortiums participating in the Commission's California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) work directly with families and students in completing the FAFSA and California Dream Act applications, among other program activities.

Commission staff will work with Cal-SOAP Project Directors and staff to promote awareness of the FAFSA changes taking place so they are able to communicate these changes to the schools and students they serve. Cal-SOAP outreach efforts may need to be expanded and scheduled more appropriately. Staff will inform Cal-SOAP Project Directors of the proposed changes so that together, we can assess the impact that PPY may have on their outreach services, if any. This may include earlier submission of Annual Program Plans for consideration by CSAC.

Staff will continue to work with stakeholders to develop an effective Cash for College internet portal that will automate and support Cash for College registration, workshop and reporting processes.

Staff will continue to provide the Commission with updates about the planning for the federal changes, including the consultation with the segments and other external parties, and outreach events.

**Responsible Person(s):** Catalina Mistler, Chief  
Program Administration and Services Division

Steve Caldwell, Senior Manager  
Program Administration and Services Division