

Item 9

Information/Action Item

Discussion of possible collaboration with the California College Guidance Initiative

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE(S):

At the April 7-8, 2016 Commission meeting, the California College Guide Initiative (CCGI) discussed its data sharing with school districts to support students' transitions from high school to higher education. Commission staff and CCGI have met twice since then to discuss collaboration on projects. One potential project would enable the Commission to use data from 25 school districts working with CCGI to increase the number of offered Cal Grant awards by pairing student's FAFSAs or California Dream Act Applications with grade point averages reported without social security numbers. Other project possibilities include CCGI's submitting students' grade point averages on behalf of the districts that they serve, thus reducing the workload burden on the districts and individual high schools.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item with no formal action required by the Commission. Commission staff will continue efforts to collaborate with CCGI to the benefit of families, students and K-12 administrators.

BRIEF HISTORY OF KEY ISSUE(S):

During the April 8, 2016 Commission meeting, CCGI provided a presentation on their mission, purpose, partnerships and their two big goals. CCGI is an initiative of the Foundation for California Community Colleges that:

- works to ensure that all 6th-12th grade students in California have access to a systematic baseline of guidance and support as they plan, prepare, and pay for college;
- partners with K-12 school districts to support students, counselors, parents, and community-based organizations with technological tools that help guide the college planning and preparation process; and
- supports data sharing, amongst educational segments, to help smooth a student's school transition from K-12 to higher education.

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CCGI is able to accomplish these objectives through:

- the management of the CaliforniaCollege.edu website that now offers an electronic transcript infrastructure and an educator facing portal to enable data-driven college and career preparation;
- K-12 district partnerships with 25 districts in California including Long Beach, Oakland and Sacramento that allows students to track A-G coursework and submit college applications include the CSU.

ANALYSIS:

On May 3, 2016, Commission and CCGI staff met to discuss the potential partnership between the two agencies and to outline a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A follow-up meeting was held on May 17, 2016, with Commission program staff to discuss the aspects of the pilot project and explore technical details of a data exchange between the respective databases. In particular, the “unmatched GPA” issue was identified as one area that CCGI could possibly provide assistance using their student data in their database.

Unmatched Grade Point Averages (GPAs) are a result of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (Dream Act Application) not matching with GPA information submitted by high schools or colleges. Many school districts, including some of the largest, do not collect social security numbers for their students. Thus, the Commission’s process for receiving GPAs from school districts and matching a student’s FAFSA or Dream Act Application to a GPA to determine eligibility for a Cal Grant award does not rely on social security numbers. Instead, the process relies on matching a number of identifying elements such as name, date of birth and address. When some of the elements do not match, the student’s application is “pending” or held without further processing until the data differences are resolved. Every year, many student records are pending for this reason, causing delays in determining Cal Grant awards for those students.

CCGI receives relevant student data from the 25 districts that they serve in a consistent and timely manner. The district offices and high schools upload their student data directly to CCGI through the CaliforniaCollege.edu platform. Commission staff and CCGI discussed various approaches to engage in a data sharing project to help increase the match percentage with non-SSN GPAs. If successful, this would greatly reduce the workload for district and high school staff, while removing another obstacle for students. After an MOU is finalized and approved, Commission staff will begin the work on this project.

In addition, Commission staff and CCGI discussed future project possibilities, including having CCGI submit GPAs on behalf of the districts and high schools that they serve. Using CCGI as a single source conduit for GPA data would substantially decrease the workload for the individual high schools and districts and even allow for earlier submissions. Earlier and accurate GPA submissions will be a vital component to the success of the early FAFSA and PPY initiative starting this October 2016. Commission staff and CCGI will continue our discussion and provide updates accordingly in future Commission meetings.

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