

FAST BLAST

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM
THE CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION



CALIFORNIA
STUDENT AID
COMMISSION

OUR MISSION: "MAKE EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL FINANCIALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CALIFORNIANS"

RANCHO CORDOVA, CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 2011



A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL

It has been a busy summer for staff at the Commission and we have a lot of important news to report!

We are pleased to welcome a new Commissioner, Senate Rules Appointee Dontae Rayford. Mr. Rayford succeeds former Vice Chair Lorena Hernandez. On behalf of the Commission, I would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for Lorena's service. Her expertise in media relations and communications provided invaluable guidance to the Commission. We look forward to her continued advocacy for low income and underrepresented students.

The Legislature passed the California "Dream Act". The first segment of this bill, AB 130, granted private financial aid to California's public colleges and was signed into law in July. It allows eligible AB 540 students to apply for and receive private scholarships at California public colleges and universities. The second segment, AB 131, is awaiting signature by Governor Jerry Brown. If enacted, this historic measure would allow eligible AB 540 students to apply for and receive state financial aid, such as Cal Grants, at California public colleges and universities. The Legislature recently adjourned the first year of its two year session.

Several of the Commission's signature **Fund Your Future** publications are now available. We are appreciative of the collaborative efforts of our partner, ECMC. As a result, these valuable outreach tools for schools, parents and students are finalized earlier than in prior years.

Outreach efforts have now been enhanced with the addition of the Commission's new [Facebook](#) page! This social networking tool will help us keep California students and administrators apprised of news related to Cal Grant programs and other types of financial aid.

Diana Fuentes-Michel
1975-1979 Cal Grant B Recipient



The complimentary *Fund Your Future (FYF)* financial aid publications provide valuable information for administrators, parents and students. These products are produced in a brochure format and in a more comprehensive workbook in both English and Spanish. These valuable resources provide a wealth of information designed to encourage California students to seek financial aid and assistance, including:

- Basic financial aid information
- Guidelines on how to apply for Cal Grants and other forms of financial aid
- A practical timeline and checklist
- Website addresses to access colleges, scholarships and additional resources
- Ways to reduce college costs
- Federal student loan information

Availability and approximate production times are as follows:

- Hard copies of the FYF brochure are available for order now.
- Available online now are the FYF Brochures in English and Spanish and the FYF English workbook.
- Hard copies of the FYF Spanish brochure and FYF English workbook will be available by September 30.
- The Spanish workbook should be available on line by early November and the hard copy will be available by the end of the month.

Place orders at:

https://www.edfund.org/pubs_order/publications.cfm.

Or, order through fax or mail using the Publications Order Form.

KEEPING UP WITH THE COMMISSION

To provide timely operational updates to our constituents, the Commission utilizes electronic technology in the forms of Operations Memos, Policy Bulletins and Special Alerts. Following are links to the most recent communications. To begin receiving these publications, sign up through CSAC List Services. From the CSAC home page, select "[Links](#)" and then select "[CSAC List Services](#)."

Operation Memos (Grant Operations Memo/GOM):

[GOM 2011-26](#), issued 9/21, provided instructions and FAQs to financial aid and registrar staff submitting GPA verifications on behalf of students.

[GOM 2011-25](#), issued 9/21, provided instructions and FAQs to high school counselors submitting GPA verifications on behalf of students.

[GOM 2011-24](#), issued 8/22, provided information regarding a hold placed on a group of new 2011-12 Cal Grant Award applicants pending a review of their asset information.

[GOM 2011-23](#), issued 8/18, announced that the 2011-12 California Chafee Grant program fall term payments were processed under the new electronic payment method on 8/15/11.

[GOM 2011-22](#), issued 8/5, outlined the requirements and the submission processes for the 2011-12 September Grade Point Average (GPA) and enrollment data needed for the Community College Competitive Cal Grant A and B programs.

[GOM 2011-21](#), issued 7/21, notified financial aid administrators about an online webinar that provided an update on changes in the Cal Grant program in accordance with [Senate Bill 70](#).

[GOM 2011-20](#), issued 7/15, provided an update on the 2011-12 academic year Cal Grant Top Two Percent and Cal Grant C award processes.

[GOM 2011-19](#), issued 7/5, provided an update of the Cal Grant operational changes affecting the Cal Grant renewal process as prescribed by Senate Bill (SB) 70.

Special Alerts (Grant Special Alert/GSA):

[GSA 2011-30](#), issued 8/26, announced the availability of the 2012-13 Fund Your Future Brochure! Brochures are available online and printed copies may be ordered for school events and distribution.

2012-16 Cal Grant Institutional Participation Agreement

The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) has begun the process of reviewing and updating the current (2008-12) Cal Grant Institutional Participation Agreement (Agreement) in preparation for its expiration on June 30, 2012 and the adoption of the new (2012-16) Agreement in February 2012. A participating Cal Grant institution must sign and abide by the terms stated in the Commission's Agreement which specifies the requirements for institutional participation in the Cal Grant programs.

The Commission is evaluating the new 2012 Cal Grant IPA Process. During the 2008 submittal of the IPA, schools were required to submit a number of documents with their final IPA. The Commission is looking to streamline the process to make it easier and less time consuming for institutions to finalize their submittal.

Internal discussions have begun to identify clarifications and updates to the Agreement to reflect current operational processes and program administration, as well as changes that were enacted by Senate Bill 70 (Chapter 7, Statutes of 2011). The Commission is requesting school officials to review the current Agreement and provide suggestions and identify specific areas that may require further clarification. You and your campus administrators are encouraged to submit your recommendations.

After the receipt and review of the comments and/or suggestions to the Agreement, changes will be shared with Cal Grant participating institutions through a webinar presentation. Institutions and other interested parties will have an opportunity to provide additional comments on the draft Agreement before it is presented to the Commission for their approval and adoption. A "Special Alert" communication regarding the webinar presentation and other details will be released at a later date. In addition, the Commission is open to segmental consultation if there is interest for such discussions by way of a conference call; staff will contact segmental representatives to determine participation. Receipt of the segmental questions in advance of the conference call would be helpful and appreciated.

A sample copy of the current [Agreement](#) is available at this link for review. Please submit comments to Clarita Cortez at ccortez@csac.ca.gov or by mail to:

Program Administration & Services Division
Attention: Clarita Cortez
California Student Aid Commission
P.O. Box 419028
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9028

We look forward to the opportunity to review and consider your comments and/or recommendations as we work together to finalize the new Agreement.

[GSA 2011-29](#), issued 8/3, announced the Commission's plan to process the 2011-12 Cal Grant fall term payments to institutions on Tuesday, August 23, 2011.

[GSA 2011-28](#), issued 8/1, served as notice that effective 8/1/2011, identified WebGrants system administrators lost their access to Cal Grant WebGrants for failure to submit the required accurate or timely WebGrants agreement access forms.

[GSA 2011-27](#), issued 8/1, provided an update on the federal Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program and redirection of remaining 2010 funds within the parameters of federal guidance due to the closure of the program.

[GSA 2011-26](#), issued 7/28, served as a reminder of the September 2, 2011 deadline for institutions to submit their access information to the Commission regarding California license examination passage rates.

[GSA 2011-25](#), issued 7/22, provided an update to the 2011-12 California Chafee Program and announced the 8/4/2011 webinar training for the Online Chafee Payment Roster.

[GSA 2011-24](#), issued 7/1, served as a reminder that June 30, was the deadline for submitting the "Grant Delivery System (GDS) - WebGrants Information Security and Confidentiality Agreement" (Confidentiality Agreement) and the "Grant Delivery System - WebGrants System Administrator's Access Request Form" (Access Request Form). Additionally, this Alert provided an extension until 8/1 to submit the required documents in order to maintain uninterrupted access to the Commission's WebGrants system.

Policy Bulletins (Grant Policy Bulletin/GPB):

[GPB 2011-01](#), issued 6/16, provided policy change guidance and requirements due to Assembly Bill (AB) 2086. This bill amended Section 69432.7 of the California Education Code which redefined "qualifying institution" for purposes of the Cal Grant Program. This bill required Cal Grant participating institutions to provide information on where to access California license examination passage rates for graduates of certain undergraduate programs if that data is electronically available through the Internet Web site of a California licensing or regulatory agency. This change became effective January 1, 2011.

Read all GOMs at

<http://www.csac.ca.gov/secured/operationmemos/2011.asp>

Read all GSAs at

<http://www.csac.ca.gov/secured/specialalerts/2011.asp>

Read all GPBs at

<http://www.csac.ca.gov/secured/policybulletins/2011.asp>

2012-13 Cal Grant GPA Verification for High Schools and Colleges



The Commission is currently accepting GPA uploads from schools for academic year 2012-13 Cal Grant awards. Electronic submission is secure, fast, and minimizes errors. Recently, operations memos were forwarded with details regarding the process. High School Counselors should refer to [GOM 2011-25](#) and Financial Aid Administrators should refer to [GOM 2011-26](#) for specific details.

The deadline for submission is March 2, 2012.

GPA uploads through WebGrants (the Commission's secure, online information transfer system) are certified electronically, so there is no need to fax or mail a separate certification or paper GPA verification form. The WebGrants GPA function provides immediate feedback regarding the number of GPAs that have been accepted and identifies any errors in the upload.

WebGrants is quicker, more secure, and saves the student or school the cost of postage for mailing the paper form. The direct online method is easiest if the school has a relatively small number of GPAs to enter. For schools that need to fill out several hundred GPA forms, direct entry would save time over the paper submission method.

Another way that WebGrants can be used by schools to submit GPAs is to create a list to upload them all at once to the Commission. The list can be created by entering the required data into an Excel spreadsheet that follows the proper specifications. Then, save the file as a text file before submitting it to the Commission.

The Commission is also expecting to have WebGrants upload capability for Non-SSN GPA files in late October. High schools interested in submitting GPA files electronically without student SSNs will soon have this functionality. The Commission will release more details in a future Operations Memo.

To complete the WebGrants access registration forms, visit <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=1194>. For questions on WebGrants registration contact the Commission's Information Technology Help Desk at (888) 294-0148.

Paper GPA Verification Form Availability

The [2012-13 Cal Grant GPA Verification Form](#) is available on the Commission's Website. Pre-printed paper forms are not available for bulk ordering. Students or schools must download and print copies if GPAs are not submitted electronically.

Questions should be directed to WGS at www.webgrants4students.org or to the Commission's Student Support Services at (888) 224-7268 or at studentsupport@csac.ca.gov.

**COMING
SOON!**

HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR WORKSHOPS

In October and November, the California Student Aid Commission will again be partnering with the California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA) and new partner ECMC to conduct the annual high school counselor workshops at nineteen sites around California.

These in-person workshops are designed to answer questions on federal and state financial aid for high school counselors and persons serving high school seniors transitioning to college for the 2012-13 school year.

Registration for these events is now finalized and available at <http://www.csac.ca.gov/hstemplatereg.asp>.



Legislative Update

The following Commission Support bills are now on the Governor's desk awaiting action:

AB 91 (Portantino)

Establishes a voluntary pilot program for local community colleges to assist students to maximize state and federal financial aid through increases in student applications.

AB 131 (Cedillo)

Called the "California Dream Act"; allows AB 540 students who meet eligibility requirements to qualify for Entitlement Cal Grant awards, BOG fee waivers, and institutional grants and scholarships.

SB 451 (Price)

Establishes additional criteria for the Cal Grant C award selection process.

CAL GRANT AWARDS UPDATE

As of September 2011, the Commission has offered over 112,000 High School Entitlement Cal Grant awards to eligible students. This award total exceeds the 2010-11 year by over 19 percent.



Commission Contact Information

Mailing address:

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Attn: (Insert Name of Branch) *
P.O. Box 419026
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9026

For UPS or overnight delivery only:

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10834 International Drive, Suite100
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

*Please direct mail to one of the following branches:

Executive Office
Administration & External Affairs
Program Administration & Services
Information Technology Services
Federal Policy & Programs
Legal & Audit Services

Websites:

<http://www.csac.ca.gov/>
<https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov/logon.asp>
<http://www.calgrants.org/>