
Calculation of a community college GPA for student at least 24 semester units at more than one school

Issue

Can data from the Community College Transcript Project be used to calculate a Cal Grant GPA for students who have completed at least 24 units at more than one college so that they can be considered for Cal Grant eligibility.

Background and Methodology

Some students have completed a total of 24 or more semester college units by the Cal Grant application deadline of March 2 but have not completed at least 24 units at any one college. This situation happens most frequently among CCC students, who often move around among schools.

In many cases, the most recent college attended may be able to report a college GPA that includes units completed at a prior institution. Some CCCs collect transcripts from prior institutions and can calculate a cumulative GPA for all college coursework a student has completed. In these cases, the fact that a student has accumulated fewer than 24 units at any one college is compensated by the ability of the most recent institution to report a verified GPA to CSAC based on cumulative units from all prior institutions.

However, in other cases the most recent college does not have knowledge of all or some of the units the student has completed at a prior school. If the student has completed fewer than 24 semester units at the current college, the most recent college will not report a college GPA to CSAC. From their perspective, the student has not completed the minimum 24 units required for college GPA reporting.

This topic was discussed at the August 11, 2005 meeting of the Enhancing Reporting and Analysis Workgroup. It was suggested that Commission staff work with the Community College Chancellor's Office (Chancellor's Office) is working on a transcript database that will merge transcripts from various CCs into one. Commission staff was asked to contact Karen Micalizio lead for the project, and Tim Bonnel to see about using this database for Cal Grant GPA submission. The goal would be to make it easier for CC students, having attended multiple Community Colleges, submit a GPA from one source.

Status

Bob Quinn of the Community College Chancellor's office will brief the workgroup on Phase I of the Transcript Project. He hopes to collect information regarding how schools or the Commission might use this data to calculate community college GPA for the purposes of establishing eligibility for the Cal Grant program. He will then take that information back to his group to determine how this effort would fit in future phases of the project.

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION BY THE MEASURES OF ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE (MAP) WORKGROUP
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2001**

Issue #1: Calculation of a college GPA when no college has information on at least 24 semester college units.

Some students have completed a total of 24 or more semester college units by the Cal Grant application deadline of March 2 but have not completed at least 24 units at any one college. This situation happens most frequently among CCC students, who often move around among schools, but can potentially occur at four-year institutions, especially independent institutions that accept lower division transfers, as well.

In many cases the most recent college attended may be able to report a college GPA which includes units completed at a prior institution. For instance, four-year institutions know the number of transferable units they accept for each transfer student and can calculate a cumulative college Cal Grant GPA based on a combination of the transferable units and the units completed at the student's current college. Similarly, some CCCs collect transcripts from prior institutions and can calculate a cumulative GPA for all college coursework a student has completed. In these cases the fact that a student has accumulated fewer than 24 units at any one college is compensated by the ability of the most recent institution to report a verified GPA to CSAC based on cumulative units from all prior institutions.

However, in other cases the most recent college does not have knowledge of all or some of the units the student has completed at a prior school. If the student has completed fewer than 24 semester units at the current college, the most recent college will not report a college GPA to CSAC. From their perspective, the student has not completed the minimum 24 units required for college GPA reporting.

The issue for the workgroup is how CSAC can obtain a GPA for such students so that they can be considered for Cal Grant eligibility.

Option 1:

The GPA verification form/file could be expanded into a GPA/unit verification form/file. Colleges would be asked to indicate how many units have been attempted at their school and how many units they know of that have been attempted at a prior college. A verified college GPA would be submitted even if the cumulative number of units of which the institution has knowledge is less than 24. CSAC would combine unit information from all the colleges submitting information on a particular student to determine if the student has the minimum 24 units required to use a college GPA. The student would be responsible for ensuring that a verified GPA/unit form/file is submitted from each college attended in order that their cumulative college units would sum to 24 or more. CSAC

would choose which GPA to use based on their policy for choosing among multiple GPA's submitted for a single student.

Option 2:

For the CCC Cal Grant entitlement program, an additional submission of a Cal Grant GPA would be accepted from the four-year school at which the student enrolls in the following fall. The four-year institution should have knowledge of all the CCC transferable units the student completed prior to the March 2 application deadline regardless of the CCC at which they were completed. If the total is at least 24 college semester units, the four-year institution could submit a GPA based on these units that would serve as a CCC Cal Grant GPA. The submission to CSAC would need to take place by some reasonable deadline (perhaps the beginning of fall term) to make the student eligible for consideration for a CCC Cal Grant entitlement award. The student would still have had to submit a FAFSA by the March 2 deadline.

For the Cal Grant competitive program, the September 2 competition may help make some students eligible for Cal Grant consideration because they may complete enough additional units at the most recent community college during the spring semester to meet the 24 unit minimum. However, if the student switches CCC mid-year, the student could still not have enough units anywhere to be able to obtain a college GPA. The September 2 competition does not provide any relief to the few students at four-year institutions who will not have enough units at any one institution to be able to submit a verified college GPA.

Option 3:

Reduce the 24 semester unit minimum to 12 units. If CCC's include units from fall semester, students who enrolled full time during the fall semester could have a CCC Cal Grant GPA calculated on the basis of that one term.

Issue #2: Choice of GPA when a student has more than one on file

CSAC needs to distinguish at least four different GPAs:

- a high school GPA based on coursework through junior year, which is used for high school seniors eligible for a Cal Grant entitlement award,
- a high school GPA based on coursework through senior year, which is used for determination of eligibility for a Cal Grant entitlement award for students out of high school for less than a year,
- a college GPA based on coursework completed at a student's current four-year institution in combination with transferable units to the four-year college, which is used for the competitive Cal Grant program,

- a CCC college GPA based on degree applicable coursework at a CCC, which is used both for the CCC transfer entitlement program and the competitive Cal Grant program.

An individual student may have more than one type of GPA on file. For instance, the student's prior high school may have submitted a GPA for a student who graduated last year and is still eligible for a Cal Grant entitlement award. At the same time, the student may have accumulated enough college units for his or her current college also to submit a college GPA or a CCC college GPA.

CSAC staff will be asked to describe how they make the distinction between these different types of GPA's and how they know which one is appropriate to use for a particular student.

Within each GPA type, a student may have more than one verified GPA on file. CSAC explicitly encourages colleges to submit a fall GPA file containing GPA's on coursework completed through the prior summer and then submit a second winter GPA containing GPA's on coursework completed through the fall term. In such cases where the GPA is coming from the same institution, CSAC policy is to choose the highest GPA, not the most recent GPA or the GPA based on the highest number of units. *The MAP workgroup should consider this policy and affirm or modify it as appropriate.*

Multiple GPA's also can occur when a student has attended more than one college, each of whom submits a GPA for the student. If Option 1, presented above, were to be adopted, this occurrence would become more frequent. In such cases where the GPA is coming from different institutions, CSAC policy is still to choose the highest GPA without regard to the number of units on which the GPA is based or how recent the GPA is. However, CSAC regulations require that a college GPA be based on at least 24 semester college units. Although instructions to colleges may indicate that they are not to report a GPA if they do not have grade information on at least 24 college units, it is not clear that all colleges adhere to such instructions. Moreover, there needs to be some way for CSAC to receive GPA's based on fewer than 24 units when a student has completed fewer than 24 units at any one college. Relying on the most recent college to report on coursework completed at a prior institution is insufficient because not all community colleges can report on coursework completed at another institution.

The MAP workgroup should consider how to resolve this situation.. If Option 1, presented above, were to be adopted, it would be possible for CSAC to use the unit information collected on the new GPA/unit verification form/file along with the GPA information from each college to calculate a weighted average GPA for students without 24 or more units at any single institution.