

Information/Action Item

GRANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Approval of August 11, 2005 Minutes

Enclosed, for the Committee's review and approval, are the minutes from the August 11, 2005 Grant Advisory Committee Meeting.

CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION

GRANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE

10811 INTERNATIONAL DRIVE
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
Thursday, August 11, 2005

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Lindsey, Chairperson
Sherri Hancock, Committee Vice Chair
Louise McClain, Commission Liaison
Lora Jo Bossio, UC
Sharon Bowles, High School
Laura Cunha, PI
Greg Gollihur, CPEC
Noelia Gonzalez, CASFAA
Maria Hernandez, Committee Member
Kate Jeffery, UC
Aram Nadjarian, AICCU
David Kopperud, CDE
Mary Robinson, CSU
Catherine Thomas, AICCU
Veronica Villalobos, AICCU
Craig Yamamoto, CCC

STAFF

Max Espinoza, Chief, Program Administration. &
Services Division
Thea Pot-Van Atta, Manager, School Support
Services Branch
(SSSB)
Anne Robertson, Manager, Cal Grant Operations
Branch
Sam Kipp, Manager, Research and Policy
Analysis Branch (R&PAB)
Brenda Metzger, Staff, (SSSB)
Edna Ong, Staff, (R&PAB)
Gloria Falcon, Staff (SSSB)
Justin Ngo, Staff (SSSB)
Dianna Ximenez, Staff, (SSSB)
Jorge Cortez, Staff, (SSSB)

ALSO PRESENT

George Montgomery, CDE
Ted Wait

Introductions

No introductions made by Committee Chair Lindsey.

Tab 1: Approval of October 21-22, 2004 Minutes

Chairperson Lindsey indicated the October 21-22, 2004 minutes were received later than she'd like and hoped other members had the time to review them. Division Chief, Max Espinoza, indicated that most members had already reviewed the first page of the minutes and what was being added was information on the workshop (second day).

Member Robinson asked that reference to GAC meetings not always having workshops be struck from the minutes. She did not view it as appropriate since the issue had to do with minutes not being approved because of missing information as opposed to stating that GAC didn't always hold workshops.

After member discussion of the timeliness, accuracy, and accessibility of the GAC minutes, the motion to have the minutes approved failed. Approval of the minutes was forwarded to October 13-14, 2005 GAC meeting.

Tab 2: Approval of May 19, 2005 Minutes

The May 19, 2005 minutes were not approved. Mr. Espinoza explained that due to workload the minutes were not ready for action today. The minutes will be reviewed for approval in the October 13-14, 2005 GAC meeting. Committee member Robinson requested that when issued, the minutes be in word format for ease with corrections and updates.

Tab 3: Committee Chair's Report

Before starting her report, Chair Lindsey asked if Commission staff had printed the 2006-07 GPA Verification Form listing the new definition of "remedial." Ms. Robertson said they would be. Mr. Espinoza explained that the new form would be downloadable and scanned with new Commission hardware and that schools would be notified of the new remedial definition.

Chairperson Lindsey clarified that the next GAC meeting was scheduled for October 13-14, 2005. She also informed members that Becky Stilling, President of Ed Fund, had resigned and Sam Kipp, Commission Research Manager, would serve as interim president. Chairperson Lindsey also noted that EdFund's counsel, Wendy Doyle, had resigned as well.

Tab 4: Work Group Update

Chairperson Lindsey explained that members Jeffrey and Thomas would provide an update of the Enhancing Reporting and Analysis Work Group (work group) meeting. Member Jeffrey began by explaining that Mr. Kipp, Commission Manager, provided student data on Cal Grant utilization by eligible students and described scenarios that included students that were 1) awarded, enrolled and paid; 2) awarded, enrolled, but not paid, and 3) awarded, not enrolled, and not paid. Further analyses will be completed to attempt to understand why awarded students do not access their grant and if the problem lies with Cal Grant program administration or if there were other factors.

Second, member Jeffrey explained that work group members asked that additional research be completed on the September 2nd competition. Specifically, the group wants to know the number of competitive awards issued to students who eligible for the March 2nd competition but did not get considered because they missed the deadline.

Third, the cell size issue in the scoring index for the competitive program was reviewed. It was determined that there was no simple fix to the cell size problem. While the issue doesn't appear to be critical, the work group recommended further review of the scoring criteria for the competitive program be completed in an effort to look at the issue from a broader policy perspective. The group recommended that 1) Commission staff get involved with the Department of Education in their review of the FAFSA, 2) work group members undertake a

review of the scoring criteria from a policy perspective within the context of any changes to the FAFSA, and 3) that Commission staff provide term data on competitive program recipients and eligible non-recipients characteristics for discussion at the next meeting.

The last issue (4th) raised, discussed the calculation of a Community College (CC) GPA for a student that attended multiple schools. 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 Bonnell 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, to submit a GPA from one source.

Tab 5: Impact of High School Exit Exam (exit exam)

Chairperson Lindsey asked for clarification on use of the GED. She wanted to know if the GED is the equivalent of a high school diploma as it pertains to the Cal Grant program's graduation requirement. Mr. Espinoza said yes and Ms. Robertson proceeded to explain that California public schools are set to begin use of the High School Exit Exam with the graduating class of June 2006.

Chairperson Lindsey noted that, with the advent of the exit exam requirement, a student may be able to get a Certificate of Completion/Attendance, but not a high school diploma. This is where the issue lies. It is conceivable, as noted by Chairperson Lindsey, that high school graduates be awarded a Cal Grant entitlement award, but under current law (exit exam requirement), not be paid on it.

Commissioner McClain explained that the state had not provided high schools with direction on this matter. She explained that the issue may be one of semantics where you can be a high school graduate, but not a "diploma student" as has been seen with students in Special Education. Member Bowles attended a summer meeting in Sacramento where a great push is underway to delay the implementation of this requirement since English as a Second Language students, along with Special Education students, will be negatively impacted by this requirement and may not be eligible to compete for a Cal Grant. Member Bowles also clarified that, in the case of her school district, a Certificate of Completion indicates that the student attended class and passed all the required courses, but could not pass the exit exam.

The issue of emergency legislation was raised in an effort to address the impact of the exit exam requirement. Mr. Espinoza explained that if the committee wanted staff to look into using this approach, then the Commission would try to find a vehicle before the legislative session was out. Member Gollihur asked about the intent of the law. He suggested that we clarify this matter with counsel before moving forward with legislative efforts. Ms. Robertson explained that she spoke with Mr. Caldwell, Manager for the Outreach and Legislation Branch, and he was not aware of any specific intent when writing the law. Counsel for the Commission has not been consulted as yet, but will be.

Commissioner McClain asked about use of the proficiency exam for the high school graduation requirement. Ms. Robertson explained that we do not use the exam as proof of graduation, and instead, use the General Education Diploma (GED). Ms. McClain explained that the GED is easier to pass than the proficiency exam and that a student passing the proficiency exam is more likely to attend college than a GED student.

Member Gonzalez asked about the impact of the exit exam requirement on admissions to four year schools. Commissioner McClain explained that if students did not pass the exit exam, it is likely that they would not be admitted to the four year schools since the student wouldn't have a diploma. In addition to high school graduation, the issue of age surfaced when discussing the GED. Students have to be 17 years and 8 months to take the GED. If a student doesn't meet this age requirement at the time that the GED test is given, they have to wait until the next exam date. This too, may be a challenge for students who do not meet the exit exam requirement.

Various segments of higher education, as noted by Chairperson Lindsey, collect high school transcripts as proof of graduation. The Community Colleges use the FAFSA question, and the student's response to it, as proof of graduation. The Commission uses the student's graduation date as noted on the GPA and FAFSA.

For the Community Colleges and the Commission, it's the student's response to specific graduation questions that would lead to consideration, or disqualification, from the Cal Grant Program. As noted by Chairperson Lindsey, the student would have to know to take the GED if they were awarded a Cal Grant and did not pass the exit exam, and graduate, or provide a GED. Most schools, and the Commission, accept self-reported graduation information from the student as noted on the FAFSA or GPA Verification Form.

Commissioner McClain reiterated her concern with the use of the GED, as an equivalent to high school graduation, and not the current proficiency exam. To the best of her recollection, Member Jeffrey explained the proficiency exam was not included as an alternative to a GPA calculation because the exam was pass or fail as opposed to scored. There was no way to scale the results and therefore could not be used. Ms. Robertson also noted that the current law does not allow use of the exam.

Chairperson Lindsey noted that consideration of the proficiency exam, as an option to the GPA Verification Form or GED, may be another option for the student. GAC could recommend that, in addition to the GED, the Commission also use the proficiency exam as an equivalent to the GPA requirement which addresses the high school graduation requirement. Ms. Robertson stated that the law would need to be changed to be able to accept the proficiency exam as an equivalent to high school graduation.

Member Thomas expressed concern with expanding the definition of equivalency by wanting to add the proficiency exam because in doing so, federal requirements may not be followed and schools would not be in compliance. The concern is with confusing state and federal requirements and even confusing funding sources for the schools.

Commissioner McClain asked for clarification on the wording on the GPA Verification Form regarding graduation. Ms. Robertson explained that the GPA Verification Form asks for the high school graduation date. Commissioner McClain explained that this is where the issue lies. Mr. Espinoza explained that further research on this matter is needed.

Member Gollihur expressed need for legal direction on the expectations of the legislation discussing the exit exam. He wants to see the definition of high school graduation and how it relates to Cal Grant eligibility and other Title IV requirements. Member Villalobos concurred with Member Gollihur and recommended Commission staff check with the Department of Education to see if work on this issue has already been done. Commissioner McClain asked that Commission staff also look at the California Alternative Performance Assessment (CAPA) in an effort to get some of these questions answered since the Special Education community has dealt with many of the same issues inherent to the exit exam requirement.

Chairperson Lindsey reiterated the concerns of the members as it pertains to the exit exam requirement. They included legislative intent, statutory constraints, current work completed by other industry folks, current definitions in use for high school graduation, and the work completed by administrators in Special Education. Mr. Espinoza commented that it is clear that more research is needed before any action can be taken and he expressed his concern about time constraints in gathering the information requested by GAC members, and determining if any of this information or issues need to be forwarded to the Commissioners for consideration. In an effort to give Commission staff more time to gather information and to revisit this issue, the next meeting for both the work group and GAC was set for August 25, 2005 at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Mary Lindsey, Chair