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## **Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System Update**

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### **Issue:**

To update the status of the Commission's Interactive Voice Response (IVR).

### **Background**

In 2001, the Cal Grant programs were expanded with the passage of SB 1644. Outreach activities connected with promoting the new programs, along with growth in the program, increased the call volume and needs of the Call Center. The Commission's Customer Service Call Center experienced an increased volume of telephone calls over the past few years without a corresponding increase in staffing. Service levels dropped and less than 80% of the calls were answered. The average abandon rate for 2004 was 23 percent. This reported abandon rate is artificially low because the number of phone lines into the unit was limited to 30. Any calls over this limit received a busy signal and are not included in the call volume statistics. If this was not addressed, it would continue to negatively impact the Commission's ability to provide high quality service to students and the general public.

Based on the increase number of calls, the Commission researched various alternatives to handle calls. An Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system was recommended to provide callers with access to their Cal Grant data when they call the Student Support Services Branch toll-free number and enter their SSN and DOB. The Commission is working with EdFund through a synergy project to implement this system.

The IVR is a text to script messaging system that will allow callers to check their Cal Grant and Chafee Grant application and award status. Students can choose to exit the menu, go back to the beginning of the menu, or speak with an agent after listening to the automated message that was selected. This process will both reduce the call hold time for callers and the frequency of agent-assisted calls. Operationally, it is expected that the IVR will allow callers automated access to basis account information which should reduce the reliance on operator assistance. In addition to reducing the number of calls requiring personal attention, like WebGrants for students, this service will be available for basic inquiries 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

### **Status**

The implementation of this project should significantly improve the level of customer service for students. Based on the projected volumes, the combination of these services will allow the Commission to achieve its service level. The Commission is currently working on the connectivity issues with the vendor, Qwest, and will begin user testing this month. The IVR is expected to be implemented by the middle of November 2005, provided all technological processes be in place.