



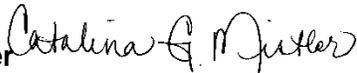
OPERATIONS MEMO

Update of the California Student Aid Commission

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TO: Financial Aid Administrators

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SUBJECT: Implementation of the California Dream Act

The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) is providing this Operations Memo as an update to the implementation of Assembly Bill 131 (AB131), the California Dream Act Application (CA Dream Application). The Commission will continue to provide updates on the California Dream Act Application and how applicants become eligible for the Cal Grant program and how campuses can access the student information.

The passage of AB131 authorized the awarding of state-funded student financial aid to AB 540 eligible students. Eligible programs include UC Grants, State University Grants and, from California Community Colleges, Board of Governors Fee Waivers (BOG) and other community college student financial assistance programs. The first financial aid assistance through AB 131 begins with school terms starting after January 1, 2013. The Commission, in consultation with campuses and the public school segmental offices, developed an online CA Dream Application to act as a single application, like the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The application gathers sufficient financial information to determine eligibility for institutional financial aid at campuses and to award state Cal Grants.

2012-13 Dream Act Application Processing

Since the CA Dream Application was made available on April 2, 2012, students have been applying for institutional aid at public institutions for the 2012-13 academic year winter/spring term. To date, over 9,500 students have submitted complete applications allowing the calculation of an Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC is calculated using the same federal methodology used to calculate an EFC from FAFSA data. The use of federal methodology is a requirement of state law for the Cal Grant program and requires asking mostly the same questions as found on the FAFSA.

Similar to the FAFSA, the CA Dream Application uses skip logic to reduce the number of questions asked of the applicant. For example, students affirmatively



responding to any of the 10 dependency questions are not asked questions on parental finances. Applicants initially can release the CA Dream Application data to up to 10 California campuses and can release the data to more campuses by replacing schools on subsequent ISIRs.

Upon submission of the online CA Dream Application the information is processed real-time. Real-time processing is possible because no database matches have to be made with other agencies. In the case of a complete application, the student is presented with their EFC and information on what to do next. Incomplete applications, or those with inconsistent application information, are also processed real-time allowing the student to be informed before leaving the application of data elements that require either correction or reaffirmation.

After submission, the record is placed in a file that is posted to WebGrants on a weekly basis. All records processed for the week are placed into the California Dream Act ISIR file on the WebGrants Report Download Screen. The CA Dream Application ISIR files contain only those ISIRs processed for the past week.

During this first processing year, the Commission has served a student population that is largely new to any financial aid application processes. The knowledge gained in working with the CA Dream applicants and parents has allowed the Commission to enhance the CA Dream Application. Many improvements and enhancements have been implemented as the Commission staff continues to consult with the segmental representatives and campus financial aid representatives. More enhancements are expected to be rolled out with the 2013-14 year application.

Determination of AB 540 Eligibility

The determination of an applicant's eligibility under AB 540 is a campus responsibility. For the last eleven years, state schools have been confirming student eligibility and collecting the student affidavit required for establishing AB 540 eligibility. State assistance for students attending private institutions is limited to the Cal Grant program. For the first time, private colleges will be responsible for collecting and retaining the Cal Grant student's AB 540 affidavit.

Use of the Cal ISIR Data

The file layout of the 2012-13 Cal ISIR very closely matches the federal ISIR. Choosing to replicate the federal ISIR was made at the request of segmental representatives during the early CA Dream Application design phase. Since the Cal ISIR so closely matches the federal ISIR, campuses that have already implemented Cal ISIR processing have found that Cal ISIRs can be loaded to their system with little system enhancements. The 2012-13 Cal ISIR differs from the federal ISIR in only one field. Field 38, the California ISIR Indicator, is used to designate that record as a Cal ISIR. Field 38 is a filler field on the federal ISIR so adding data to that field does not affect processing of the Cal ISIR.

The other significant difference between the federal and state ISIR is how the data is processed. Since the Commission cannot perform federal database matches, for example with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the National Student Loan Database, those ISIR fields that report on federal database matches contain no data. An Operations Memo on how to view the Cal ISIR data will be released shortly.

Student Assistance and Communications

Complete instructions for the CA Dream Application are online at www.caldreamact.org. A Dream Application worksheet, which fills the same role as the FAFSA on the Web worksheet, allows

students to gather the information necessary to complete the CA Dream Application. Information on AB 540 and a CA Dream Act FAQ are also available. Students and parents requiring assistance with their CA Dream Application may call the Commission's toll free number at (888) 224-7268 or email us at caldreamact@csac.ca.gov.

2013-14 Dream Act Application Processing

Starting January 1, 2013, the Commission will begin accepting 2013-14 CA Dream Applications for Cal Grants and for other state institutional aid. For the 2013-14 award year, similar to the FAFSA, the 2013-14 CA Dream Application will request 2012 financial data from the applicant. Also, like the FAFSA, between January 1 and June 30, CA Dream Applications will be available for both the 2012-13 and 2013-14 academic years. Schools are advised to provide guidance to potential applicants to submit the correct application.

File Layout and Field Descriptions

Complete record layouts, comment code descriptions and test files are available on the WebGrants Help page. Please note that the 2012-13 record layout is different from the 2013-14 record layout.

Please contact the Commission's School Support Services Branch at (888) 294-0153 or at schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov for any assistance on the CA Dream Application.

Working together to effectively promote education beyond high school!