



OPERATIONS MEMO

Update of the California Student Aid Commission

November 13, 2013

GOM 2013-30

TO: Financial Aid Administrators

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SUBJECT: 2013-14 Unpaid Competitive Cal Grant Awards

On September 20, 2013, the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) approved several actions to increase the number of paid Competitive Cal Grant awards in order to improve the program's utilization rates beginning with the 2013-14 academic year. Those actions included the following:

- 1) Take immediate steps to communicate with students more frequently and to assist campuses with updating their payment rosters.
- 2) Expand the enrollment data provided by the community college campuses to the Commission to include the number of units, which will not be used to withdraw students.
- 3) Report back at the Commission's November 2013 meeting on the progress of the staff's actions to increase the Competitive Program utilization rates, including the number of paid awards and unused awards to date by campus.

Communications to Students

To ensure that students take action to receive their Cal Grant payment, we have sent them a communication instructing them to log in to their WebGrants for Students account and confirm that their Cal Grant award accurately reflects the institution they are attending. If they are attending a different institution, they can make a school change so that their award gets processed to the correct campus roster.

We also advised students to contact their financial aid office to inquire about the status of their Cal Grant award, if they have not yet received payment. To remind students of their Cal Grant award, this communication will be sent monthly to all students who continue to have no transaction posted on their account. A copy of the student communication is enclosed.

Assisting Campuses with Updating Payment Rosters

We are monitoring campus Cal Grant payment rosters on a weekly basis to identify the progress of students getting paid during the fall term. Based on these



reports, we have identified several campuses with a large number of unpaid students, and we are communicating with them directly to assist with their processing needs. Campuses that need assistance or training can contact our School Support staff directly.

Included below are a few helpful tools and reports that can assist campuses in the processing of payments for their students:

- **Detailed Reconciliation and Roster Reports** – these reports can be used to reconcile student-by-student term payments.
- **Customized rosters that include “paid” and “unpaid” filters (new)** – this new feature allows staff to view a customized roster while displaying only “paid” or “unpaid” students.
- **Unclaimed Awards Report** – this report will allow a campus to view a student’s award that is not currently on their roster.
- **Posting “NAs” for students not in attendance at your school** – as a reminder, posting an “NA” for a student **will not** withdraw the student’s award. The student will be removed from your roster and a communication will be sent to the student notifying them they need to update their WebGrants for Students account.

These tools are designed to assist institutions with managing their Cal Grant rosters. The Commission will continue to provide training for any institutional staff who may wish to learn more about these features.

Expanding the Enrollment Data Files

Another action taken by the Commission was to authorize staff to use community college enrollment files to better identify a student’s enrollment status and ultimately ensure that they receive their Cal Grant payment. Community college campuses currently provide us with Enrollment Data Files which only use a Social Security Number to identify eligible applicants for the September 2 Competitive Cal Grant award process. This next step of expanding the enrollment data to include the number of units would identify students who may not be enrolled at least half-time. This additional information would assist us in communicating with the awarded student who has not yet been paid.

Commission Update on the Competitive Program Utilization Rates

At its November 21-22, 2013 meeting, staff will provide the Commission an update on the progress of our actions to increase the Competitive Program’s utilization rates, including the number of paid awards and unused awards to date by campus. It is our goal to pay every eligible student their Cal Grant award and to ensure that the 22,500 Competitive awards are processed for these eligible students. It is imperative that we work collaboratively to ensure that all students awarded each year have access to their award and receive their payment.

If you have questions regarding any of the information in this memo, please contact the School Support Services Branch at schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov or at (888) 294-0153.

Enclosure: Communication to Students on Competitive Cal Grant Award

Working together to effectively promote education beyond high school!