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New Law Requires Notification about Timely Degree Completion

Students must be provided with the number of semester units required for four-year graduation

Sacramento, CA (2018) – New legislation is set to go into effect on January 1, 2019 requiring that higher education students receiving state financial aid be advised that in order to graduate within four years they must take an average of 15 semester units and also that Cal Grant is limited to four academic years.

The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) supported AB 2248, which was authored by Assembly Member and chair of Assembly Budget subcommittee on Education Finance, Kevin McCarty, and requires both the Commission and institutions of higher education to provide notification to recipients of state financial aid.

“The Commission supports providing students with as much information as possible at the earliest time so that they understand that if they don’t take at least 15 units per semester to graduate in four years, they may not have financial aid for their fifth or sixth year,” said Lupita Cortez Alcalá, Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission.

Under the Cal Grant rules, a student who takes 12 units per semester or more (or the equivalent on a quarter system) is deemed full-time and will expend a full semester of Cal Grant eligibility. However, in order to be graduated in four years with Cal Grant eligibility, students must average at least 15 semester units in order to complete their degree. Taking one, additional year to be graduated can result in lost income, additional costs of attendance, and additional compounded interest on student loans. The estimate average net impact for one year of additional attendance is approximately \$80,000 for a University of California Student and almost \$70,000 for a California State University student.

Currently, there is a disconnect between the 120 units or 15 units per semester, necessary for graduation in four years and the commonly used definition of “full-time,” which is 12 units per semester. The new law would require the Commission and postsecondary institutions to notify students of the four-year time limit for Cal Grants and the need to take 30 semester units, or equivalent quarter units, per year to graduate within four years.

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The California Student Aid Commission is the state’s policy leader in the administration of financial aid for higher education, making education beyond high school financially accessible to all Californians. California Student Aid Commission serves the needs of not only

today's college students but tomorrow's students, guiding them through the application process. Information and tools are available online for the parents of tomorrow's college and career technical students, a fully staffed call center answers questions and the California Student Aid Commission provides workshops and funds grants to organizations that provide access opportunities for students who are first in their family to attend institutions of higher education. For more information on how the California Student Aid Commission serves to educate, inform, and support students, their educational institutions, and the professionals who assist them please visit our website at <https://www.csac.ca.gov> or follow us on [Twitter](#) (@castudentaid) and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CSAC.StudentAidCommission/>.

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