

CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION



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**DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CALIFORNIA
STUDENT AID COMMISSION, ANNOUNCES HER RETIREMENT**
35 years in California Higher Education Policy

Sacramento, CA (2015) – Effective August 1, 2015, Diana Fuentes-Michel, Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission, has decided to step down. She has an impressive 35 years of public service to the people and the students of the State of California; and, 12 of those years were spent as executive director of the Commission.

The California Student Aid Commission is the principal state agency responsible for administering financial aid programs for students attending public and private universities, colleges, and vocational schools in California. The California Student Aid Commission also provides financial aid policy analysis and leadership, in partnership with California's colleges, universities, financial institutions and financial aid associations. The Commission awards \$2 billion in college financial aid to over 300,000 students in California annually. The mission of the organization is to make education beyond high school financially accessible for all Californians.

“As I leave state service, I will continue my work with low-income, first-generation students, particularly our state’s Dreamers. I intend to remain a voice for those students who have not been afforded access to quality education. I plan to speak, volunteer and continue my mentorship of the next generation of student leaders for California,” said Fuentes-Michel.

Commission Chair Hal Geiogue said, “Diana has had a long and distinguished career serving the students and citizens of California. The Commission wishes her the best as she moves forward.”

During her time in state service, she had the opportunity to work for the Governor of California as Assistant Secretary for Higher Education and Undersecretary for Education during the Administration of Governor Gray Davis. She also served in the California Legislature as a former Senate and Assembly staffer, a Budget Analyst for the Department of Finance, as Vice Chancellor for the California Community Colleges, as the Director of Public Affairs in the area of Educational Outreach for the University of California as well as the Legislative and Budget Director for the California Postsecondary

Education Commission (CPEC), the former coordinating board for California postsecondary education.

During her tenure, she worked with the Commission and its staff to:

- *Increase the number of students receiving Cal Grants by 97 percent and the cost to fund the awards program by 238 percent from 2004-2014.*
- *Develop and expand a \$25 million dollar comprehensive outreach program to low income students including a 100% increase in Cash for College Workshops (400 in 2003, 800 in 2014).*
- *In April 2014 the U.S. Department of Education reported that California was among the ten most improved states in FAFSA completion, a designation attributable to the increase.*
- *Implement the California Dream Act, the nation's first state financial aid program for qualified, undocumented immigrant-status college-bound high school graduates.*
- *Initiate California's WebGrants4Students online service to provide students with 24/7 access to track their financial aid grant applications.*
- *Automate the Commission's student service call center to expedite financial aid information sharing for students, parents and educational institutions.*
- *Implement a real-time grant delivery system to streamline administrative processes and information sharing between Commission staff, financial aid offices, students and parents.*
- *In the last four years of the Brown administration, 77,000 more students received a Cal Grant, 80,000 additional students with the Middle Class Scholarship.*
- *The Dream Act and Middle Class Scholarship were passed and implemented, the Cal B access grant increased to \$1,648 and the passage and signature of the College Access Tax Credit (Senate Bill 798 De Leon) holds the promise of the Cal Grant B rising closer to the real cost of college (from \$1,648 to \$3,000).*
- *She directed the successful transition of the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) to the Direct Lending Program. This transition resulted in over \$460 million in grant aid and services provided to the State of California.*
- *She also transitioned the Commission into online, social media platforms that reach thousands of students, school administrators, counselors, media and community partners.*

Each year, the Commission with its staff of approximately 107 positions:

- *Processes over 1.5 million FAFSA and California Dream Act applications;*
- *Notifies over 426,000 students of their eligibility for our programs;*
- *Distributes funds to over 295,000 students;*
- *Provides thousands of high school counselors, teachers and outreach personnel with training on the FAFSA and aid processes; and*

- *Answers thousands of calls and emails regarding eligibility for our eleven programs.*

Fuentes-Michel added, “All of what I have been able to achieve over the years is because of the great staff of the California Student Aid Commission. It has been an honor to serve with them and I will miss my daily interaction with them. My plans are to retire effective August 1, 2015 to provide the Commission with sufficient time to establish a search process to select a qualified candidate to assume the responsibility of executive director. I will work cooperatively to assist the Commission through the transition of leadership.”

In closing, Fuentes-Michel states, “I want to thank the Commission for allowing me to work and provide leadership on the important policy issues that impact college-going students among low-income and working class families. My passion as a policy “warrior” on college affordability and equal educational access opportunity come from my own personal struggle to improve my life through achieving a quality education. My career and public service would not have been possible without the existence of the Cal Grant program. Without the ability to afford a college education, I would not have been able to obtain, not one, but, two degrees. The federal, state and institutional aid programs allowed me to afford college. The student support programs at Loyola Marymount University and the educators who assisted me and cared about my success were part of the package of programs and services that allowed me to successfully graduate.”

For more information and interviews, please call (916) 206-1285.

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