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Executive Director to Leave in January

Lupita Cortez Alcalá to become Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

Sacramento, CA (2018) – The Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission, Lupita Cortez Alcalá, will become the next Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction as Tony Thurmond takes the reins at the California Department of Education in early January. Ms. Alcalá has served as the Executive Director of the Commission since December 2015.

“Lupita has been instrumental in repositioning the Student Aid Commission as a significant voice in the conversation about the state’s higher education system,” said Dr. Lande Ajose, Chair of the California Student Aid Commission. “We could not be more pleased with her contributions. In three short years she has helped the Commission change its focus from just administering student financial aid programs to becoming a strong policy leader with a voice on how best to reform Cal Grants to meet the needs of today’s students.”

Under Ms. Alcalá’s leadership, the Commission has embarked on a year-long process of studying the gaps of the existing Cal Grant and Middle Class Scholarship systems, making short-term and medium-term suggestions for closing gaps for student funding, making college more affordable and streamlining the processes. On November 29-30, which will be Ms. Alcalá’s last Commission meeting, Commissioners will consider recommendations on how to reform the entire Cal Grant program. “Cal Grant” is an assortment of grants, known as Cal Grant A, B and C with differing eligibility requirements and benefits.

In addition to leading the effort on Cal Grant reform Ms. Alcalá reinstated the Student Expense And Resources Survey (SEARS) which will help inform financial aid decisions throughout the state and beyond about the true costs faced by students for housing, food, transportation and other costs. The preliminary results from a fall 2018 pilot have already been informative and are being used in cost estimates for the current year.

Ms. Alcalá also impacted the internal operations of the Commission as she led and advanced the effort to modernize the computerized Grant Delivery System, securing all approvals and funding necessary from California Department of Technology and the Department of Finance. The Commission now expects a functional and dynamic system in place by June 2020.

Additionally, Ms. Alcalá saw an opportunity to revamp the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) when the Los Angeles area was unexpectedly left without a consortium to receive grant funding. She was able to re-establish the Cal-SOAP Advisory Committee and obtain input for a successful bidding process. The Commission will be using a similar process for selecting the remaining grant recipients for 2020.

While disappointed by Ms. Alcalá’s departure, Chair Ajose wishes her well. “I know that Superintendent-elect Thurmond is interested in moving a number of significant initiatives forward,

including ensuring that affordability is not a barrier to college access for California's high school graduates. Lupita is the absolute right choice for the job.”

“There is always more that could be done,” said Ms. Alcalá. “But, I think that together with my wonderful team at CSAC, we have made positive progress in several areas that needed some change. I hope the Commission will continue to grow and make changes when necessary.”

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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/>.