



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING: UPDATE ON CAL GRANT MODERNIZATION

Sacramento, CA (Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020) – The [California Student Aid Commission](#) (CSAC) invites members of the public to a [special Commission meeting](#) on February 20, 2020 at 1:00 pm in the State Capitol, Room 437. The Commission will discuss a proposal to modernize and reform the state Cal Grant program to ensure that all California college students can afford and access a higher education.

Due to shifting student demographics and the rising costs of living, the original structure and design of the Cal Grant program—which is tuition-centric—falls short of advancing affordability for an increasing number of students. Furthermore, the Cal Grant program has become an overly complicated patchwork of eligibility requirements and programs that keeps many students from accessing the financial aid they need, forcing them to rely on excessive loan debt, and in some cases, forgoing food and housing security, in pursuit of a higher education.

In 2019, three legislators introduced major financial aid reform legislation. Senate Bill 291 (Leyva) would expand financial aid to address non-tuition expenses at California Community Colleges. Assembly Bill 1314 (McCarty and Medina) is aimed at simplifying and streamlining the Cal Grant program. In September 2019, these legislators requested that CSAC convene a group of stakeholders, including student representatives, to provide policy and fiscal recommendations for modernizing the Cal Grant program. This Work Group developed a policy framework for a simplified State financial aid structure that substantially reduces the need for low-income students to rely on debt to finance their education and formalizes a role for institutional financial aid in reducing students' total cost of attendance (COA).

"The feedback we have collected directly from students has confirmed what we already knew – college students are struggling at alarming rates to meet their basic needs to succeed in college," said Marlene Garcia, Executive Director of the Commission. "The future of our economy and State workforce depend on our ability to provide a high-quality and affordable education beyond high school for millions of California students. These students will help fill the predicted shortfall of college-educated workers in the next decade."

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The California Student Aid Commission administers the state's \$2.8 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the Cal Grant, the Middle-Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing higher education.