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**CALIFORNIA IS AMONG THE FIRST-IN-THE-NATION TO OFFER EARLY FINANCIAL AID AWARDS
TO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, INCLUDING DREAM ACT STUDENTS**
Apply for state grant aid by March 2, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: NOVEMBER 16, 2016

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SACRAMENTO, CA (2016) – Executive Director, Lupita Cortez Alcalá, announced today that the [California Student Aid Commission](#) has offered Cal Grant financial aid awards earlier than ever before, to approximately 28,000 high school seniors including 1,100 California [Dream Act](#) Applicants.

On September 14, 2015, President Obama announced important changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)), including an earlier October 1, 2016 opportunity to apply for federal financial aid. “This is a game-changer for California families because now these students know how much federal and state financial aid they may be eligible for – even before they submit their college applications,” said Cortez Alcalá.

Students are strongly encouraged to start submitting their financial aid applications now, and they no longer have to wait until January to apply. For the Commission to determine state grant eligibility, students must provide 1) a completed FAFSA, or California Dream Act Application, and 2) a school verified Cal Grant Grade Point Average ([GPA](#)). In order to have this early opportunity to receive aid, it is imperative that school districts and high schools accelerate their [submission of students’ GPAs](#) to the Commission.

Once a student completes a FAFSA they may become eligible for thousands of dollars in federal, state, campus aid, and private scholarships.

The California Dream Act provides eligibility for state-funded student financial aid for undocumented students who are pursuing a legal pathway to citizenship and meet other requirements established by AB 540. [Undocumented](#) students who qualify will also continue to receive [University of California](#) and [California State University](#) Grants, the California Community College [Board of Governors’ Fee Waivers](#), Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP) awards; and, they will remain eligible for many types of private scholarships administered by campuses. The application deadline for the [California Dream Act](#) and other state grant financial aid is **March 2**.

“The California Student Aid Commission strongly confirms that California’s greatest strength is in the richness of our state’s diversity and it remains committed to providing student financial aid to all eligible applicants, including undocumented students who are seeking legal status in the United States and who want to pursue a higher education, to fulfill their a career goals and contribute to a strong economy,” said Cortez Alcalá.

(CON’T)

The California Student Aid Commission is the principal state agency responsible for administering all student financial aid in California. The commission awards the [Cal Grant](#), the [Middle Class Scholarship](#), the [California Dream Act](#), the [Chafee Grant for Foster Youth](#), and many [other grant or loan assumption programs](#). Approximately, \$2.2 billion in college and career education financial aid is available for eligible students during the 2017-18 academic year.

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