



## News and Updates for High School Counselors from The California Student Aid Commission

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA

APRIL 2012



### A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL

As spring fever begins to set in and another uncertain budget brings added worry, I appreciate your dedication to keeping students focused on their high school and higher education goals. Students must remain attentive to their studies as their GPAs continue to be important to their future college choices. Seniors face the challenging task of understanding college costs and financial aid offers as they make their higher education decisions.

Commissioners Lawrence Hershman, Dr. Enrique Murillo Jr., Lynn de Bie and Israel Rodriguez have concluded their service. Although we will miss their guidance as official members of this body, we know they will continue to advocate for educational access and opportunity in their professional and personal roles, and thank them for their contributions. The Commission is honored to welcome its newest members:

*Terri Bishop, Executive Vice President of academic strategy and senior advisor to the chief executive officer at the Apollo Group.*

*John R. McDowell Jr., Professor of labor relations and director of the Labor Center at Los Angeles Trade Technical College.*

*Jamillah Moore, President of Los Angeles City College and former senior vice chancellor at the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office from 2004 to 2007.*

*Michele Siqueiros, Executive Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity and board member for the Institute of Higher Education Policy.*

*Ishan Shah, of Fremont, is pursuing a degree in political science at Ohlone College and has served as a commissioner on the Human Relations Commission in Alameda County and as a student senator for the California Community Colleges.*

*Johnny Garcia Vasquez, of Berkeley, is pursuing a degree in ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley and is currently working at Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice at Berkeley School of Law as a student assistant.*

**Diana Fuentes-Michel**  
(1975-1979 Cal Grant B Recipient)

### *Appeal Process for Late Cal Grant Entitlement GPA*

State regulations also allow Entitlement Cal Grant applicants to appeal the late submission of their Cal Grant GPA if circumstances beyond their control delayed or prevented the applicant from submitting a verified GPA by the March 2, 2012 filing deadline.

To receive appeal consideration, the applicant must submit an explanation of the circumstances that were beyond their control. The applicant must also have submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the March 2 deadline.

Entitlement applicants may submit a late March 2 GPA on the "Late Cal Grant GPA Verification Form." As of April 4, 2011 this form will be available online at <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=1177>.

A 2011-12 Entitlement Cal Grant candidate must graduate high school or achieve the equivalent on July 1, 2009 or later and, if submitting a GPA, the GPA must be calculated from high school grades.

*In order for an appeal to be accepted,  
it must be received at the Commission by  
May 15, 2012.*

### **2012-13 CAL GRANT AWARDS UPDATE**

As of March 31, 2012, the Commission has offered over **100,000** Cal Grant awards to High School Entitlement eligible students. This award total exceeds last year's at the same time and we expect to offer more entitlement awards in the upcoming weeks.

## RELEASE OF THE CALIFORNIA DREAM ACT APPLICATION

The Commission is pleased to announce the release of the statewide California Dream Act Application (Dream Application). For the first time under Assembly Bills (AB) 130 and AB 131, AB 540 and other eligible students attending college in California may apply for and receive student financial aid from both publicly and privately funded sources. For the most part, the 2012-13 Dream Act Application serves students who are ineligible to file the FAFSA. These include undocumented students who have previously not had an opportunity to apply for state financial aid assistance.

Students can complete the Dream Act Application online for 2012-13 financial aid assistance at [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org).

Public college and university campuses will be preparing financial aid packages very soon so students who will be in college for 2012-13 should apply now. If the student lists a college on the Dream Application, that college will be provided the data entered through the Dream Application. However, since not all colleges have indicated they are ready to accept Dream Application data, students should contact each campus under consideration for specific instructions on applying for aid at that school.

The Dream Application instructions and pre-completion worksheet are posted on the Resources section at [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org). We encourage current AB 540 eligible college students, and current AB 540 eligible high school students who plan to attend college for the 2012-13 academic year to use the Dream Application.

During the development of the Dream Act Application, the Commission has enjoyed partnering with CASFAA, CCCSFAAA, AB 540 advocacy and student support groups, colleges, high schools and students during both in-person and teleconference meetings. We appreciate the advice and formulative feedback that has guided us during the development of this application. This is a historic event! We look forward to further collaborations in the future.

Cal Grant Program eligibility will be first determined for the 2013-14 academic year.

Starting January 2013, applicants may use the 2013-14 Dream Act Application to apply for Cal Grant awards.

The Commission and Cash for College invite high school counselors, outreach, admissions, college educators, community members, advocates, students and families to join the Cash for College CollegeWeek LIVE Video Events:

### CALIFORNIA DREAM ACT DAY APRIL 20, 2012 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Training for counselors, educators and advisors of AB 540 students

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Line-by-line presentation on completing the Dream Act Application

2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Online Chat sessions with financial aid, Dream Act Application experts

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Applying for Scholarships

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Spanish presentation: Line-by-line presentation on completing the Dream Application

**STUDENTS: TWO (2) \$500 DREAM IN ACTION SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED**

REGISTER TODAY AT COLLEGE WEEK LIVE:  
<http://www.collegeweeklive.com/CACFC>

### AFTER THE FAFSA LIVE ONLINE VIDEO EVENT APRIL 30, 2012 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

High school seniors and senior classrooms can log-in for live video events to learn how to:

- "Fix Your FAFSA" - fixing common errors
- Create a WebGrants For Students Account to track your Cal Grant
- Get the most out of your Cal Grant award
- Decode your Financial Aid Award Letter and Compare Financial Aid Offers

Students will also be able to log-in from home or in computer labs after school from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. to chat in questions to campus and Commission staff.

Go to [www.calgrants.org/collegeweeklive](http://www.calgrants.org/collegeweeklive) to find out about registering for the CollegeWeek Live events and view last year's events.



## April Advisory

### NOW IS THE TIME TO BE ASKING QUESTIONS!

April is the month when college bound students need to choose the school they plan to attend. Most colleges require that forms or deposits are sent by the school's intent to register deadline. For most colleges in California, the intent to register deadline is May 1. By early April, the student should have received college acceptance letters and financial aid award offers. These notices should be carefully evaluated by the student and parents. Students should also speak to their high school counselor or college advisor for advice.

Make sure that students know that they must formally accept private scholarships and grants. They do not have to make an immediate decision to accept student loans since they are typically available throughout the year. However, campus work-study jobs are limited in number. If offered work-study, the student should carefully consider the advantages of having an on-campus job as opposed to an off-campus job.

If a student applied for a Cal Grant by March 2 and has not received an e-mail or letter regarding their status by April 15, he or she may choose to contact the Commission:

- e-mail [studentsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:studentsupport@csac.ca.gov)
- log-in to WebGrants 4Students [www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org)
- call toll free at 888.224.7268

### SETTING UP THE 2012-13 CALENDAR

April is also the month when high school counselors should begin setting up fall financial aid night events. Depending on when your school establishes its calendar for the next year, counselors should pick the best night to maximize attendance.

Check the sports calendar (e.g., avoid NFL Monday Night Football, Fridays and Friday High School football events!) Confer with other departments so as not to compete with other campus related events.

Instructional aides on hosting a financial aid night can be found at the website of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) at [www.nasfaa.org](http://www.nasfaa.org). Click on the Students, Parents and Counselors tab than look for the "Resources for Counselors" tab on the left side of the page.

Or, use the Counselor's Guide created by the Commission. This PowerPoint presentation will walk you through financial aid options and includes basic notes for your presentation. It can also be customized for your specific use.

Go to: <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=40> to view the current presentation of Fund Your Future – Planning and Paying for College.

## Paper GPA Verification Forms

Staff at the Commission has keyed approximately 51,000 paper GPA verification forms for the 2012-13 award year. These GPA's include students who have submitted test scores such as the GED, SAT and ACT in lieu of GPA's.

Students who have incomplete data or errors on the GPA form will be sent a 10-day letter to correct any information on the form. State regulations specify that students who respond within the 10 days will still retain their March 2 priority filing date.

### NON-SSN GPA PROCESS

The Commission's Non-SSN GPA submission process allows high schools to submit GPAs without having to secure a student's Social Security number (SSN). In place of matching the GPAs to FAFSA records using the SSN, the inclusion of other student demographic information to the GPA file allows matching to the FAFSA without the SSN. For example, the student is matched by name, date of birth, mailing address, phone number and other data.

School districts and individual schools are encouraged to look into implementing Non-SSN GPA submission for 2013-14. During the 2012-13 Cal Grant application period, over 400 high schools chose this method of submission. The result has been a decrease of 20,000 paper GPA verification forms received at the Student Aid Commission.

Since the GPS data was processed to the Commission's system almost immediately, students were able to see their GPA on their WebGrants record much sooner than waiting for the Commission to key in the data.

While we are pleased with the reduction in Commission staff workload due to the decrease in GPAs forms, use of the Non-SSN process also means that high school registrars, counselors and administrators have less work leaving high schools with more time to work on other things.

The addition of AB 540 eligible students into the Cal Grant applicant pool for the 2013-14 Cal Grant award selection will require a Non-SSN GPA submission since many of these students do not have Social Security numbers.

If you have interest in converting to the Non-SSN GPA submission method, please contact Adrian Felix at: (916) 464-2995 or [afelix@csac.ca.gov](mailto:afelix@csac.ca.gov).

# FAFSA COMPLETION BY HIGH SCHOOL WEBGRANTS4STUDENTS

## U. S. Department of Education

For the last two years, the U. S. Department of Education has received high school attendance information from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). To view the Department's published FAFSA completions by high school go to: <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/datacenter/fafsahs.html>.

The federal high school completion numbers are publicly viewable by state and high school. Individual student data is not viewable.

## California Student Aid Commission

The Commission also provides high schools with this same FAFSA completion data, Cal Grant GPA submission data and award status by student. For student privacy, the Commission will release this data only through WebGrants, the Commission's Internet-based access for transferring this Cal Grant to high schools.

High schools are encouraged to establish access to WebGrants not just to view their student FAFSA and GPA submission data but also in preparation for the 2013-14 financial aid year when the California Dream Act will take full affect giving AB 540 eligible students eligibility for the state Cal Grant program. Cal Grant GPA submission for this student population may require GPA submission without Social Security numbers (SSNs).

To learn more about WebGrants please visit <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=1191>. For further information on gaining WebGrants access, and how to submit Cal Grant GPAs without using student SSNs, please contact the Commission's School Support Services Branch at 888.294.0153 or [schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov).

## CONTACTING THE COMMISSION

Tabitha Frost: (916) 464.2113  
or at [tfrost@csac.ca.gov](mailto:tfrost@csac.ca.gov)

Janice Wright: (916) 464.6420  
or at [jwright@csac.ca.gov](mailto:jwright@csac.ca.gov)

Justin Watkins: (916) 464.6425  
or at [jwatkins@csac.ca.gov](mailto:jwatkins@csac.ca.gov)

[www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov)  
[www.webgrants4students.org](http://www.webgrants4students.org)  
[www.calgrants.org](http://www.calgrants.org)  
Or, call toll-free at (888) 294.0153

Using WebGrants4Students, Cal Grant applicants and recipients can monitor their status and check for missing requirements. When establishing an account, students must use the same information that was included on their FAFSA application. One of the most common reasons for a student not being able to open an account is using a name spelling or configuration different then was used on the FAFSA.

For example, a student would not be able to open an account if they entered their name as "Edna Mae Johnson" if the FAFSA shows "Ednamae Johnson". Even including that space between name components would disallow the user from opening an account. If the FAFSA has a spelling error, the student should open their account with the misspelled name. Any errors can be fixed once the account has been established.

Simple errors of a letter or two can be fixed via e-mail. Students should send the correct name spelling, the incorrect name spelling, their birth date and their Cal Grant ID number to [studentsupport@csac.ca.gov](mailto:studentsupport@csac.ca.gov). Significant changes to name spelling and names changed due to legal action must be submitted in paper format. The student should complete the Grant Record Change Form for Students (G-10) available on-line at: <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=80>.

In addition to the G-10, the student must include a copy of their driver's license or passport, or other legal documents showing their legal name. Students should also make the corrections to their FAFSA and with any colleges they are considering attending.

## California Student Aid Commission Addresses

### Our mailing address:

California Student Aid Commission  
Attn: (Insert Name of Branch) \*  
P.O. Box 419026  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9026

### For UPS or overnight delivery only:

California Student Aid Commission  
Attn: (Insert Name of Branch)\*  
10834 International Drive, Suite 100  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

### \*Please direct mail to one of the following branches:

- Executive Office
- Administration & External Affairs
- Program Administration & Services
- Information Technology Services
- Federal Policy & Programs
- Legal & Audit Services



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