



CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION

MAKING EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL FINANCIALLY
ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CALIFORNIANS

California Student Aid Commission's Newsletter

WINTER 2016

Newsletter for High School Guidance Counselors

The start of 2016 means that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the California Dream Act Application (CADA) filing season has begun! To help you through the next couple of months, we have included information on Cash For College Workshops, tips on how to upload students' GPAs, and common FAFSA mistakes in our Winter Newsletter.

Important Dates

- ◆ **March 2** — FAFSA and CADA Deadline (Students)
- ◆ **March 2** — GPA Submission Deadline (High School Counselors)

All live webinars will be recorded and can be accessed on the Commission's [Training Page](#).

- ◆ **Recorded Webinar** — CEC 69432.9 and the New GPA Upload Requirements
- ◆ **Recorded Webinar** — CA Dream Act Overview: High School Counselors
- ◆ **Recorded Webinar** — GPA Submission: NON SSN

*“An investment
in knowledge
always pays the
best interest.”*

- Benjamin Franklin



Let the FAFSA season begin!

In This Issue

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Meet CSAC's Executive Director: Lupita Cortez Alcalá



"I truly believe all students can succeed."

-Lupita Cortez Alcalá

California Student Aid Commission Welcomes New Executive Director: Lupita Cortez Alcalá

On January 4, 2016, Lupita Cortez Alcalá became the next Executive Director at the California Student Aid Commission. Ms. Cortez Alcalá left her position as the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction and Learning Support for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson. Ms. Cortez Alcalá represented the Superintendent in the program areas of English/language arts, history, visual & performing arts, physical education, teacher support, support for English learners and migrant students, curriculum and instructional resources, early childhood programs, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, high school initiatives and career technical education.

Ms. Cortez Alcalá was formerly the Deputy Superintendent of Government Affairs and Charter Development and was responsible for the administration of all departmental activities relating to state and federal legislation and funding as well as providing guidance and support for the development and oversight of high quality charter schools. Prior to joining the California Department of Education, Governor Davis appointed Ms. Cortez Alcalá as his deputy legislative secretary. In that capacity, she advised the Governor on all Kindergarten through grade 12 and higher education legislation and served as a liaison to the education community.

Ms. Cortez Alcalá is a graduate of Harvard University's School of Education, earning a Master's degree in Planning Administration and Social Policy. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of California, San Diego, majoring in Political Science and minoring in Spanish Literature. She has over 16 years of experience in education, including Government Affairs for K-12 and Higher Education.

More information on the next Executive Director Lupita Cortez Alcalá can be found in our [Special Alert](#) and [Press Release](#).

A Letter From the Executive Director

Dear High School Counselors,

My name is Lupita Cortez Alcalá and I am honored and excited to be the California Student Aid Commission's new Executive Director. It has been a few weeks into my tenure and already I am diving head on into our programs and projects to ensure that your students have everything that they need to achieve financial aid for higher education. I strongly believe in the Commission's mission to make education beyond high school financially accessible to all Californians especially since I was once in those shoes. As an immigrant from Mexico, I came to America as an English Learner and struggled in school. Without the support of an encouraging teacher – shoutout to Mrs. Peterson! – I might not have overcome my obstacles in school. And without financial aid support, I would not have been able to attend college at UCSD and start my path to success.

I truly believe all students can succeed. Here at the Commission, we want to do everything we can to support you as you help students navigate the college and financial aid application process. You are often the key to access and opportunity for many students and we need more of you! Thank you for all that you do! Please do not hesitate to reach out to us for any help, support, or questions that you may have.

Wishing you all a happy and prosperous year!

Looking forward to supporting you in partnership,

Lupita Cortez Alcalá
Executive Director
California Student Aid Commission

Tips for GPA Submissions Uploads

[Education Code 69432.9](#) requires that all public schools, including charter schools, electronically submit a grade point average (GPA) to the Commission for all grade 12 students each academic year. High School Counselors will be electronically submitting GPAs using the [WebGrants](#) system. GPA submissions are due by **MARCH 2**.

Here are some helpful hints to help you through the GPA submissions process:

- Before you begin, read **all** of the instructions carefully. Click the helpful links below for directions.
- If your school uses a Student Information System (i.e. Aeries), you may be able to extract a data file that meets the Commission file upload specifications and is ready to upload to the Student Aid Commission via Webgrants.
- If you don't have the SSIDs (Statewide Student Identifiers) for your students, you'll need to put ten zeros ("0") in each cell as that is a required field in the NON-SSN GPA upload process.
- A common error in the NON-SSN GPA upload is not adding the two additional zeros ("00") at the end of the school code.
- Another common problem that occurs is when schools try to upload a NON-SSN batch file using data from their own Excel file instead of using the Commission's Macro-enabled Excel file template.
- If you need additional support, do not hesitate to contact Institutional Support at or schoolsupport@csac.ca.gov or 1-888-294-0153.

Helpful Links:

[SSN GPA Upload User Guide](#)

[Non-SSN Upload User Guide](#)

[Training modules on GPA Submission Process](#)

[Webinar Trainings on GPA Submission](#)

[Non-SSN GPA Q&A](#)



7 Common FAFSA Mistakes

1. Not Completing the FAFSA.
2. Not Being Prepared
3. Not Reading Carefully.
4. Inputting Incorrect Information.
5. Not Reporting Parent Information.
6. Not Using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.
7. Not Signing the FAFSA.

Excerpt taken from [Homeroom: The Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Education.](#)





CASH FOR COLLEGE

California Cash For College Workshops

California Cash For College (CCFC) Workshops are officially under way! There are over 850 workshops scheduled starting January 4 until March 2. If your school is hosting a workshop, you should already have your event published on Eventbrite and returned the order form for folders, Fund Your Future magazines, and volunteer T-shirts.

The [CCFC webpage](#) has a wide variety of resources for hosts to use including the paper exit survey, workshop sign-in sheet, instructions to on how to conduct your CCFC workshop, 2016 CCFC Poster, English and Spanish FAFSA presentations, and many more.

Students will be able to find a nearby workshop to attend and register by using www.eventbrite.com.

Students must type **CCFC2016** in “Search for events” and the City or Zip Code to find a workshop that they wish to attend .

Upcoming FAFSA Changes

WHAT: In September 2015, President Obama announced changes to the FAFSA that will impact millions of students for the 2017-18 academic year.

WHO: Students will be able to file a FAFSA as early as October 1, 2016 and can report tax information from a prior-prior year allowing tax information from two years ago. This means that high school seniors can start applying for financial aid in October to see what they might qualify for in money for college.

WHEN: The new changes take effect in October 1, 2016 for the 2017-18 FAFSA.

WHERE: This change will affect California and the rest of the country. California Cash For College workshops will be scheduled earlier to meet the needs of the school sites.

WHY: This change allows students to fill out the FAFSA earlier which will then allow them to have their financial aid packages before making college decisions.

For more information, click [here](#).

2016-17 Prior Year (PY)	2017-18 Prior-Prior Year (PPY)
FAFSA opens January 1	FAFSA opens October 1
Only allows taxes from previous year	Allows taxes from two years ago
File FAFSA and must make corrections to data once taxes are filed	Taxes already filed and data is correct from previous year
Incorrectly aligned with college application calendar	Better aligned with college application calendar
Makes it difficult to meet priority filing deadlines	Removes conflict with priority filing deadlines
Financial aid information available near college decision deadline dates	Financial aid information available further in advance of college decision deadline dates
Forces more stressful and less-informed college and financial aid decisions	Allows for more at-ease, informed college and financial aid decisions

Operations Memos and Special Alerts From the California Student Aid Commission

- GSA 2015-55 [Upcoming FAFSA Prior-Prior Year Workgroup Webinar](#)
- GSA 2015-58 [2016-17 Online California Dream Act Application Release](#)
- GSA 2016-02 [Cash for College Workshop — Student Registration](#)
- GSA 2016-03 [WebGrants System Status and Availability](#)
- GOM 2015-41 [CA Chafee Foster Youth Grant Program Update](#)
- GOM 2016-02 [2016-17 High School Entitlement Cal Grant Award Offers](#)
- GOM 2016-03 [WebGrants Updates for 2016-17 ISIR Changes](#)

To Subscribe to our ListServ and receive Operations Memo and Special Alerts straight to your email inbox, click [here](#).

The Commission's Institutional Support Employee Spotlight

Name: Marvin Kyee

Title: Associate Governmental Program Analyst

Hometown: San Francisco, CA

Graduated from: High School: Galileo Academy of Science & Technology, San Francisco, CA College: San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.

Favorite Part of Your Job: Knowing that I help change someone's life for the better.

Advice for High School Students: College is completely within your reach. There are a lot of financial resources to help you and make your college dream a reality.

Advice for High School Counselors: Don't wait until the last minutes to upload the GPA.

If I could go back in time to visit my high school self, I would tell him: Do more research on the financial resources that are available for college.

Favorite high school memory: Having good friends.



Contact Us

Give us a call or write to us for more information or support.

California Student Aid Commission

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Visit us on the web at www.csac.ca.gov.

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