

CASFAA Letterhead

March 28, 2008

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger,

The California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA), representing over 1600 financial aid administrators employed at over 600 institutions of higher education in the State of California, is writing to express our concern over proposals to cut California student assistance programs by eliminating the Competitive Cal Grant program. We deeply respect the difficulty of correcting the state's budget crisis but feel that restricting access to higher education is a counter-productive remedy.

This year the Competitive Cal Grant program has provided access to higher education for over 25,000 Californian students who might otherwise not be able to attend college. Although the majority of these attend community colleges, students in the other systems will also be impacted. This Fall Competitive Cal Grants were awarded to 17,906 community college students, 892 University of California students, 2,274 students attending CSU campuses, 3,364 students attending vocational post-secondary institutions and 767 students in independent colleges. Although the majority of these students are currently attending low-cost community colleges, Cal Grant awards are renewable for four years and are, in many cases, the major resource enabling and motivating these students to complete their transfer program and continue on to a university where the Cal Grant will cover all or most of their fees. Eliminating this program also eliminates higher education options for thousands of students and we request that this program be retained in the budget.

We are also concerned about the operational budget reductions to the California Student Aid Commission, particularly its impact on the Commission's outreach programs. The California Student Aid Commission's outreach programs have brought the message that college is possible to thousands of low-income, first-generation students who would not have otherwise attended college.

We strongly support the following statement issued by The Institute for College Access & Success in their March 2008 report on the impact of the proposed Cal Grant cuts:

*“The proposed cut to the Cal Grant programs.... targets the students with the lowest incomes and highest grades. These aspiring students stand to lose the most – and pose the greatest loss to our workforce and economy – if they cannot afford the education and training that colleges provide.”*

Higher education is essential to building financial strength for our state and the families in our state. We understand the immense constraints and difficulties inherent in resolving the state budget crisis and believe that expanding access to higher education is an important factor in the solution to these problems. From that perspective, we urge you not to enact these budget cuts.

Sincerely,

Louise Jones  
President

Cc: Senator Jack Scott  
Assemblywoman Karen Bass  
Assemblyman Anthony Portantino