



CASFAA and California Financial Aid Reform: Student Success

The California Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA) is a non-partisan, non-profit professional organization, whose members share a common goal of improving access and delivery of federal, state, institutional and private donor financial aid to California students.

CASFAA is encouraged by the legislative theme of increasing Cal Grant access and streamlining processes for students in light of a focus on simplification of financial aid awarding and institutional accountability. However, with the increase of accessibility we also support students' institutional choice and ensuring school accountability with measurable student outcomes by taking advantage of currently available resources.

For example, we appreciate the efforts addressed in the AB 1314 Cal Grant Reform Act¹ proposal of consolidating 4 programs (Cal Grant A, B, C and the Middle-Class Scholarship) into a single award. We are hopeful that not only will this reduce the complexity of communicating program information to students and families, but so too will the complexity of administrative processing requirements be reduced. As administrators we want to responsibly provide gift aid, and varied program criteria and regulations often impact the timeline for this awarding process to students. While consolidation may reduce complexity, we are concerned that AB1314 may reduce Cal Grant access for those students who were previously eligible under the competitive grant. In addition, the proposed bill removes eligibility barriers tied to age, years out of high school, GPA and AB 540 status, but does not clearly define the new eligibility requirements and steps towards program implementation. For instance, based on the new needs analysis formulas will students attending different higher education sectors potentially be excluded from grant consideration? As the bill's amended language suggests, the Commission may create a working group to "develop addressing the non-tuition costs of students based on the total cost of attendance and the level of student need." CASFAA supports the inclusion of all higher education sectors in determining Cal Grant eligibility.

Furthermore, with a focus on accountability we strongly advise legislators take advantage of current, available data in their evaluation of school's compliance efficiencies. By creating new reporting systems for school administrators who are already maintaining robust compliance standards with existing federal, state and institutional policies regulations, additional reporting requirements often lead to additional administrative burden. By using existing data which measures student outcomes, the legislature will minimize impact to financial aid offices where aid administrators are already at capacity with awarding aid, improving existing systems and

¹ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1314



processes, and most importantly advising students and their families. Examples of available data systems include, but are not limited to:

- [U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education Program Data](#) page provides data on the federal student financial aid programs including the Federal Pell Grant, the Federal Family Education Loan Program, Federal Campus-Based Programs, Federal TEACH Grants, and the Federal Student Loan programs.
- [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#), the core postsecondary education data collection program for U.S. Department of Education's National Center of Education Statistics and the College Navigator tool, provides information on institution by type, institutional offerings, admissions and enrollment, cost of attendance and prices charged, student financial aid. In addition IPEDS provides information on [Graduation rates](#) and [Employment](#), by selecting State Abbreviation and these statistical variables.
- [U.S Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Data Center](#) provides student aid data, school data, Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program lender and guaranty agency reports, and business information resources.²

From a position of cautious optimism and partnership, CASFAA recognizes and appreciates state legislative efforts to ensure California's students receive the funds needed to support their academic success. As financial aid administrators who work daily with students, we are very cognizant of the potential administrative and technical systems challenges to implement program and regulatory changes, which in turn may lead to potential delays in much needed funding to students. CASFAA looks forward to continuing our partnership with the State to ensure all students, regardless of their higher educational path, receive the funds they need in a timely, caring and equitable manner.

² https://www.nasfaa.org/Financial_Aid_Data_Resources#2