

# CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION

## STATEMENT OF POLICY PRIORITIES

(December 2020)

As the primary state agency responsible for California's student financial aid programs, and in furtherance of its responsibility to provide policy leadership on college affordability issues, the California Student Aid Commission establishes the following policy priorities to fulfill the state's historic, long-term commitment to making college affordable for students and families. Commission staff shall refer to these priorities when determining the agency's position on legislative, budget, or other policy proposals. The Commission Chair and Chair of the Legislative, Audit, and Budget Committee shall be consulted when any policy matters arise requiring Commission input that are not addressed in the Statement of Policy Priorities.

**Maximize equitable public investment** in California students through financial aid.

- Ensure access and affordability for students at all eligible institutions of higher education across California.
- Provide financial support for basic needs - including food, housing, transportation, and access to technology - sufficient to enable successful, timely completion of an undergraduate degree or certificate program.
- Respond to the evolving challenges California students face in pursuit of a higher education, including the negative impacts of COVID-19 on students and institutions.

**Maximize the effectiveness** of state financial aid programs.

- Ensure quality standards and consumer protections for students attending an eligible institution of higher education in California.
- Promote a holistic approach to college affordability which considers the total cost of attendance, including non-tuition expenses.
- Advocate for a streamlined financial aid process that provides equitable access to financial aid resources.
- Remove barriers that prevent students from accessing state financial aid (e.g., age, time out of high school, Grade Point Average, and immigration status).
- Ensure undocumented students – who are unable to access federal financial aid – have access to financial aid opportunities comparable to their peers.
- Advance efforts that help students access other forms of assistance to cover non-tuition expenses (e.g., CalFresh, housing assistance, affordable student lending options, etc.).

**Advance early awareness** of financial aid for California students and families.

- Enhance early awareness of financial aid through outreach programs that help students and families plan for the total cost of attendance.
- Promote a college-going culture through regular communications and outreach.

**Influence and inform** federal financial aid policy that impacts California students and families.

- Support efforts to simplify and streamline the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and expand need-based aid available to students (e.g., Pell Grants).
- Advocate for the removal of barriers that prevent immigrant or undocumented students from accessing federal financial aid.