

California Student Aid Commission
Student Impact, Outreach and Communications Committee

Item 7

(Information Item)

Update on outreach and social media

SUMMARY:

This item provides an update on the California Student Aid Commission's (Commission) outreach and social media activities, including Cash for College statewide events to support students and families in successfully completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for the 2021-22 academic year. Commission staff will present updated information on the number of Cash for College workshops hosted, number of participating students and other data related to this year's outreach activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item. No action is required.

BACKGROUND:

In the Fall 2020, the Commission launched the new Cash for College Train the Trainer program to expand our partnerships and increase the number of Cash for College events. This training program offers FAFSA/CADAA training and resources to new and existing community partners to enable them to organize and host Cash for College workshops. These community partners play a critical role in reaching students and families to help them understand and complete the financial aid application process. Our Train the Trainer efforts leading up to March 2nd have resulted in the commission training over 500 people representing 147 organizations through 11 workshops. 68 of the organizations we have trained have registered in our system and the commission has certified 228 individuals to host workshops. We accomplished this while partnering with the Community Colleges Chancellor's office to build a larger volunteer base through the Train the Trainer Program that will sustain our outreach efforts post March 2nd.

The Commission launched its first Statewide Cash for College webinar in December 2020 to provide virtual assistance to students and their families in completing the FAFSA or CADAA. Many of our partners who hosted in person Cash for College events prior to the pandemic were very supportive of the Commission's plan to organize the statewide webinars to allow for many students to participate. Commission staff led the presentation that walked through the steps in completing the FAFSA or CADAA. Staff and volunteers answered questions through the chat box and the Cash for College toll-free hotline.

California Student Aid Commission

Student Impact, Outreach and Communications Committee

The Commission hosted three Statewide Cash for College webinars in January 2021 and four in the month of February 2021. Through our outreach efforts, many of our English and Spanish webinars were co-sponsored by various legislative caucuses, the Mexican Consulates, and the support of community-based organizations who are committed to reaching as many students as possible, throughout California. In terms of our local Cash for College efforts, we project that local sites will host roughly 780 workshops by March 2nd. We are in the process of calculating the number of students served by the local and statewide workshops. Currently, we have collected data from 193 workshops. These workshops have served 8114 students.

Outreach Campaigns

An aggressive Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign was launched to focus on getting students to apply for financial aid. We have connected with various individuals across different industries to speak about the importance of applying for financial aid. Additionally, we have launched a Cash for College social media campaign which has been shared widely across multiple social media platforms. We have grown our Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter following and overall engagement over the past few months through organic and paid content, including various Facebook and Instagram lives. Our social media platform now includes Tik Tok.

The Commission is making every effort to connect with students to inform them of the March 2nd deadline for completing their financial aid applications and the availability of Statewide Cash for College webinars to assist them in this process. This also included direct outreach to students through emails and postcards. The postcards with QR codes made it easy for students to register for Cash for College webinars by scanning the code on their phone. Over 150,000 reminder communications were sent multiple times to students who we have received a grade point average for but not a FAFSA or CADAA.

Community College Partnership

The Commission has partnered with the Community College Chancellor's Office to build a larger volunteer base through the Train the Trainer Program that will sustain our outreach efforts post March 2nd. Our campaign to reach more community college students will include Cash for College webinars, social media advertising, and working closely with campuses to promote the FAFSA/CADAA. Our plan includes communicating with students who did not file their applications by the March 2 deadline to remind them of the September 2 Cal Grant Community College deadline and that federal aid is still available.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

Edwin Chikukwa, Cash for College Coordinator
Executive Office

Michael Lemus, Program Outreach and Marketing Manager
Executive Office

ATTACHMENT(S):

Outreach and Marketing Presentation presented on March 10, 2021