

California Student Aid Commission
Personnel, Evaluation and Nominations Committee

Item 5

(Information Item)

Update on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Equal Employment Opportunity Office role and recently implemented programs

SUMMARY:

This item provides an update on the California Student Aid Commission's (CSAC) Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee and initiatives that are part of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program and Services.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item; no action is required.

BACKGROUND:

CSAC DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION/EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORUNITY PRACTICES:

California is a state of great diversity – in geography, racial and ethnic representation, sexual orientation and gender identity, professional experience, and disability status. CSAC is committed to building a workforce that reflects our state's rich diversity and increases representational equity through internal engagement and external outreach. The Commission's Equal Employment Opportunity Programs and Services play an integral role to achieve a diverse workforce. The EEO Office is responsible for implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of many EEO program components: Workplace Investigations, Workplace Violence/Bullying and Abusive Conduct, the Disability Advisory Committee, Bilingual Services Program, Upward Mobility Program, Reasonable Accommodation, Employee Assistance Program, the Wellness Advisory Committee, Workforce Analysis, Workforce Planning and Leadership Succession Planning.

In April, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion initiative was started as part of CSAC's EEO Programs and Services. A DEI committee was launched that promotes a diverse workplace culture and build a sustainable DEI program for all staff. DEI initiatives will consist of trainings, data, and demographic information, celebrating monthly activities/events/culture, quarterly "Can We Chat Sessions" – conversations about History, Awareness and Transformation. The DEI Committee members consist of staff from the various divisions within CSAC.

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To date the DEI Committee worked collaboratively to produce a DEI statement for CSAC's web site, intranet, HR recruitment and CalCareer job vacancies and marketing/communication initiatives. The statement reads:

"Stronger Together When Embracing a Diverse Workplace Culture. The California Student Aid Commission is committed to fostering a space of diversity, inclusion, and belonging for our team members, partners, students, and communities we serve. CSAC embraces a positive work environment made up of individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. By leverage our collective strengths, abilities, and insights, we are able to further CSAC's mission of promoting educational equity and making postsecondary education affordable for all Californians."

An upcoming all staff training will be facilitated on the topics of DEI and Unconscious Bias. The training will cover the following: DEI benefits/risks, DEI best practices, EEO protected characteristics, and Unconscious bias basics. Commission staff will provide an update of newly implemented DEI initiatives at a future Commission PEN meeting.

The federal, state, and local governments manage programs intended to increase opportunities for women and people of color. These programs are called "Affirmative Action" programs. In 1996, California Proposition 209 (Prop 209) an Affirmative Action Initiative was passed. Prop 209 prohibited state, local governments, districts, and other government entities from discriminating against or giving preferential treatment to any individual or group in public employment, public education, or public contracting on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin.¹

Prop 209 eliminated state and local government affirmative action programs in the areas of public employment. As for state agencies, affirmative action programs included setting goals and timetables to encourage hiring members of "underrepresented" groups for state government job.²

Prop 209 amended the state constitution to prohibit state governmental institutions from considering race, sex, or ethnicity in the areas of public employment.

Since Prop 209 was enacted, research has shown that highly diverse workplaces excel at innovation and problem-solving, which are essential components to making State agencies highly effective. The State has embraced Diversity & Inclusion as a fundamental framework for leadership development, and employee engagement while complying with the law. The State continues to create an inclusive culture where diverse internal and external stakeholders feel heard, supported, and valued. The State

¹ Proposition 209 and Public Employment in California, Berkeley Law, <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Proposition-209-and-Public-Employment-Workforce-Diversity.pdf>

² Proposition 209 Prohibition Against Discrimination or Preferential Treatment by Sate and Other Public Entities, https://lao.ca.gov/ballot/1996/prop209_11_1996.html

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is also ensuring that recruitment/retention and employee benefits are broad-based, inclusive, and reflective of California's diverse communities.

Proposition 16 was included in the 2020 election to repeal Proposition 209 Affirmative Action Initiative, however, it did not pass. Over 56% of Californians voted against Proposition 16, which would have removed the state's ban on public institutions prioritizing "race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin" in admissions or hiring. In other words, the ballot initiative would have allowed the return of affirmative action if it had passed.

CSAC is taking proactive actions with diversity equity and inclusion initiatives in hiring and recruitment practices and to openly discuss issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. We cultivate a culture where CSAC staff can feel comfortable having conversations about these topics.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

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