

California Student Aid Commission
Subcommittee

Item 3

(Action Item)

District and/or institution requests to postpone financial aid application deadline(s), pursuant to Education Code Section 69513.2

SUMMARY:

California Education Code (CEC) Section 69513.2 authorizes the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) to grant an additional 30 calendar days beyond an application deadline for any financial aid program under its administration, if the Commission finds that a qualifying event meets the criteria specified in CEC Section 69513.2. For these requests, institutions and districts are requesting postponement of the March 2nd financial aid application deadlines for various aid programs. The qualifying event is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has drastically impacted the educational sector this past year including efforts to counsel, to conduct outreach, and to promote financial aid opportunities and key deadlines such as the March 2nd priority deadline. These challenges have adversely impacted students' ability to meet the application deadline for financial aid programs.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Commission's elected officers find that the Covid-19 pandemic is a qualifying event, and that this event has adversely impacted the ability of pupils or students within the school district, community college district, or an area or region within the state, to successfully complete and submit their financial aid applications by the March 2nd priority deadline and grant the requests for a 30-day extension of the 2022-23 March 2nd state financial aid application deadline for each of the postponement requests presented in this item.

BACKGROUND:

Current statute allows the Commission to grant up to an additional 30 calendar days beyond an application deadline for any financial aid program under its administration if both of the following conditions are met:

- (1) The Commission receives a formal request to postpone the application deadline from either the superintendent of a school district or community college district or from the president or chancellor of a California institution of higher education that is eligible to receive state funds for student financial assistance.

California Student Aid Commission Subcommittee

- (2) The Commission finds that a qualifying event, including but not limited to, natural disasters, state of emergency declared by the Governor or President of the United States, labor actions, or any event or extenuating circumstance outside of the students' control that, in the judgment of the Commission, has had an adverse effect on their ability to successfully complete and submit their financial aid applications by an established statutory deadline.

Section 69513.2 authorizes the commission, on a permanent basis, to delegate to its elected officers the authority to grant, by a unanimous decision of all such officers, the deadline postponement authorized by this section. At its March 26, 2020 Commission meeting, the Commission delegated the authority to grant a financial aid application deadline postponement request to its elected officers, which include the chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary.

During the 2021-22 March 2nd financial aid application season last year, the Commission granted requests for a deadline postponement for the very first time due to the low submission rates caused by the qualifying event of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission received nearly 150 requests to postpone the March 2nd deadline from high schools, district offices, college campuses from all segments and segment offices. The Commission approved the appeals at the April 7, 2021, subcommittee meeting of its elected officers. Based on the 150 requests and subsequent Commission approval, all students were covered in the state of California. There were 44,000 new FAFSA and CADAA applications submitted between March 3rd and April 1st that were deemed processed on-time. Of the 44,000 applicants, approximately 18,600 were in the first-time freshmen cohort.

One year later, schools and institutions are in a similar situation due to the adverse impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic on students' ability to meet the March 2 financial aid program deadline, including significant drops in financial aid application submissions, difficulties in reaching high school students in remote learning environments, and the districts and institutions' inability to host annual cash for college events.

On February 17, 2022, staff released a Special Alert reminding districts and institutions of their ability to, and the requirement for, requesting postponement of the application deadline pursuant to CEC Section 69513.2, for financial aid programs using the FAFSA and CADAA applications, as well as an optional form template districts and institutions may use to submit their request including the information specified in this Section:

- A description of the qualifying event and how it impacted the students' ability to submit their financial aid applications by the applicable state financial aid deadline.
- A list of any financial aid outreach events that were canceled or delayed due to the qualifying event.

California Student Aid Commission Subcommittee

- Data showing that there has been, or is likely to be, a reduction in the number of students who have completed a financial aid application from the previous year (if available).

The Special Alert release is one month earlier than last year so that the requests for the postponement may be reviewed at the March 9th Commission meeting. If approved by the elected officers of the Commission, program staff will release a follow-up Special Alert the following day on March 10th with the announcement of the Commission's action. The earlier timeline of this postponement process is significant as it will allow Commission staff, counselors, campuses, and other advocates to communicate the extension of the deadline to April 1, and to follow up with students that missed the original March 2nd. This will allow for a final Financial Aid Application outreach campaign while within the 30-day window of the application deadline postponement.

Due to the numerous challenges students, districts, and institutions are facing during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Commission staff recommends granting the 30-day extension requests of the 2022-23 March 2 state financial aid application deadline for each of the postponement requests presented in this item.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

Tae Kang, Deputy Director
Program Administration and Services Division

Alessandra Morrison, Assistant Deputy Director
Program Support Services

Julia Blair, General Counsel
Executive Office

ATTACHMENT(S):

2022-23 ADPR Applications Summary

2022-23 ADPR All Applications part 1

2022-23 ADPR All Applications part 2

2022-23 ADPR All Applications part 3