

California Student Aid Commission
Student Impact, Outreach and Communications Committee

Item 6

(Information Item)

New Cal Grant texting initiative

SUMMARY:

This item presents an overview of the Commission's effort to launch a new texting initiative, along with a campaign marketing strategy with the goal of increasing the number of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and California Dream Act Application (CADAA) submissions by the March 2nd deadline.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item; no action is required.

BACKGROUND:

The Commission has begun implementation of its first-ever texting campaign, and a marketing and communication strategy to promote this new opportunity for prospective and current students. In preparation for this launch, Commission staff met virtually and in-person to:

- Assess how to launch the new texting initiative, what the purpose and focus would be, what technology capabilities are needed to implement and what are quick wins that can be accomplished by the March 2nd deadline.
- Workshop technology and tactical strategies, audience and outreach campaign concepts, and develop phases of the campaign roll out, as well as a technical and strategic mapping process.
- Develop a report with prioritized quick wins; gaps, barriers, risks, and blocks to technology strategies; in addition to long-term, and tech-enabled recommendations.
- Roll-out a basic texting app campaign based on initial recommendations and scaling opportunities.

The Commission is endeavoring to produce new and innovative solutions to connect with high school seniors and college students, particularly in advance of the new FAFSA and California Dream Act Application completion requirement for all California High School seniors beginning in the fall 2022. Early this year, a texting campaign team consisting of staff from Student Support; Marketing and Outreach; Information Technology; and Enterprise Strategy kicked off this pilot campaign with a set of targeted emails.

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This first phase of emails provided approximately 285,000 students with information about their financial aid application status and the March 2nd deadline. They were invited to opt-in to receive future updates and information via text. Approximately 500 (0.002%) students chose to opt-in to the texting platform from this initial email. Following are the text messages sent to the students that opted-in:

- *Complete your FAFSA today! State financial aid deadline is March 2nd.*
- *Complete your CADAA today! State financial aid deadline is March 2nd.*
- *Renew your FAFSA today! FYI - Your Cal Grant will renew in the summer.*
- *Renew your CADAA today! FYI - Your Cal Grant will renew in the summer.*
- *We still need your GPA by March 2nd. Have your school submit your GPA to CSAC.*

Because many students are slow to respond to emails, staff are exploring various strategies to invite students to opt-in to the texting program. Postcards have been prepared to send to students who received the kickoff email designed with an emphasis on encouraging opting-in to receive text updates and deadlines. The postcards will provide the ability to opt-in using a QR or short code.

Marketing and Outreach staff have incorporated the opt-in language at the end of the Cash for College (C4C) survey, in addition to providing students with information about the option to receive text updates at workshop events. Of the 7,232 students that have so far completed the survey, 165 (2.28%) opted-in to receive text messages.

Staff will continue research and explore additional opportunities to notify students of the new and exciting texting platform available for receiving Commission updates, critical information, and deadlines.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

Leslie Glover, Customer Service and Processing Unit Manager
Program and Administrative Services Division

Kristen Trimarche, Enterprise Strategy and Performance Officer
Executive Office

ATTACHMENT(S):

Texting Campaign Messaging Content