

Cal-SOAP Project Directors Report

The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) has operated as a hands-on, face to face program helping secondary students prepare for education beyond high school since 1978. The following compilation represents examples of how Cal-SOAP consortia are adjusting to working with students and families in the COVID-19, shelter in place environment. This list is not exhaustive. Consortia will report additional detail when they submit year-end reports after the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year.

<p>Has the pandemic and working remotely changed your business model? If, so, please provide details that address:</p>	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cal-SOAP local staff working remotely. • Updated consortia websites to be student friendly. • Current Technology: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business and Zoom for Educators, Google Suites, Google Hangouts, email, text and social media. • College students created informational videos on financial aid, A-G requirements and other topics for middle and high school students. • Mailed postcards about programs and services to families. • Converted student application to a DocuSign form, allowing for student/parent e-signature. • Enhanced information security guidelines to ensure safe and secure remote communications with all student participants. <p>Communication Challenges and Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some school districts are not allowing Tutors/Advisors to work directly with teachers or counselors through virtual platforms. Therefore, staff are not able to communicate directly with school staff. • Cal-SOAP Project Directors and staff continue to work with district staff. While all have good working relationships with school districts, all will continue to be flexible with the changing environment. • Using each Cal-SOAP's database, staff continue to reach out to students directly as well as families to inform them about the opportunities available through Cal-SOAP. <p>College Student Advisors/Tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College advising and academic support services transitioned to supporting students through virtual advising and academic support. • Continued advising or tutoring sessions using phone calls, text messages, email, Google Hangouts, and Zoom. • Continued work with high school seniors to complete financial aid applications. • Connecting with students, creating forms, flyers, virtual presentations, and more. • Checking in weekly with students to provide support with 4-year admission decisions, financial aid verification, award letters, community college application and college matriculation.
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- Communications Manager created Cal-SOAP LA TV; Coaches post short videos to the Cal-SOAP LA website. Topics include, how to apply for community college, transfer stories, and more.
- Each College Advisor has been assigned a high school.

College Student Advisors/Tutors Challenges and Solutions

- Not all our school districts have been open to Cal-SOAP student tutoring sessions or inviting them to virtual classrooms due to security concerns; this reduced the number of sites and tutors available.
- Engaging students to respond to emails/text/calls. For many, the digital divide has been expounded.
- Some consortia did not have laptops for tutors and advisors to use and have worked with Commission staff to purchase equipment.
- Created Individual Cal-SOAP Google email accounts for tutors and advisors to use with students.
- Consortia are recruiting college students and developing orientation and training programs to facilitate quick onboarding. Once trained, they will be assigned to high schools.

Activities

- Advisors have implemented student pre-recorded and live virtual workshops. Topics include Financial Aid Literacy, Loan Education, and College Admissions. Advisors are reaching out to all seniors via email and phone to compete year-end senior surveys.
- SAT Prep, Tutoring, Advising, Parent Workshops, and I'm Going to College continue.
- Virtual experiences include campus visits, study abroad experience, career technical education and meet a mentor.
- Engaging and interactive activities (virtual events, games and quizzes) to assess college readiness prior knowledge and effectiveness of our delivery methods of services.
- Tutoring shifted from one-on-one instruction to virtual open office hours during school year.
- Summer Melt activities continue with student contact via online platforms.
- Summer Packets or Summer Boxes (hard copies with prepaid envelopes for mail-back) with support via Zoom and Google Classroom.
- FAFSA/CADAA completion in March: one consortium indicated that nearly 800 seniors had not completed a FAFSA. Staff contacted them via email, texts assisted them using Zoom.
- In lieu of in-person Summer Academy, transitioned all curriculum and activities to an online format. Students have access to a series of workshops June 8-26. More than 200 participants!
- Many students made more efforts to reach out to Cal-SOAP staff as one of few programs that continued to provide support to assist students into their summer and/or fall term in their respective colleges.

Activities Challenges and Solutions

- School sites did not have the infrastructure to support tutors with traditional or online retro-methods (tutoring relies on school personnel supervision).
- Protocols, procedures and permissions were non-existent in order to continue remote contact/services to minors (MOU's, etc.). Summer Program is in modification stage.
- Cancelled events between mid-March and May but we are working towards having all events virtual in the fall.
- Training and workshops have replaced many of the activities. Topics include tutoring training, peer advisor workshops, academic support, specific subject assistance, and more. As noted above, Cal-SOAP staff quickly transitioned to serve students efficiently and effectively in the COVID-19 environment.

D. Equipment and/or Programs

- Funds that had been allocated to in-person services were reallocated for equipment updates, program outreach materials, and mailing resource packets to participants.
- All staff have verified premium Zoom accounts and shared Google access.

Equipment and/or Programs Challenges and Solutions

- Laptops provided for staff and some tutors but not all. If additional funds remain, purchasing laptops may be considered.
- Majority of staff using personal laptops but only utilizing shared drives; working with Commission staff to address technology needs to provide Cal-SOAP laptops.
- Consultant hired due to pandemic. Study Smart Tutors to develop Financial Literacy video series in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Considering additional consultants to address need for online content, training, and other needs.

Staffing

- Increased check-ins with staff from monthly to weekly. Work hours remained the same.
- Regular brainstorming sessions on possible modifications to continue services. Remote work assignments and electronic forms and timesheet submissions.
- Staff for next academic year under review. Analyzing needs for dedicated advisors if remote.

Staffing Challenges and Solutions

- The new Inland Empire consortia through the CSU San Bernardino project did not have any staff pre-pandemic. The pandemic has, however, created additional barriers for posting positions as the university is in a hiring slow down.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortia continue to receive applications for student positions. The overall effect of COVID-19 on staffing continues to take shape. Some other outreach programs that work with Cal-SOAP have endured budget cuts making partnerships more difficult.
<p>How are you addressing summer melt?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collaborative partners are offering different summer melt activities. Once we have Cal-SOAP up and running the activities will be more streamlined. At this point we are trying to provide as much help and assistance as we can to our district partners to help support their summer melt activities. • East Bay and Solano will address summer melt at all our high schools from June 15th through July 22nd. • Assisting students to enroll in summer and fall courses. This includes orientation registration, housing applications, scholarships and financial aid application completion, matriculation steps for community college, and making sure that they are navigating through their "To Do Lists" in their college portals. • Staff will advise seniors on FAFSA completion, studying tips, monitoring college email, reviewing and understanding their federal Student Aid Report (SAR) and more. • One consortium hosting 55 workshops in June to address financial aid/literacy, college transition, career exploration, and more. • Advisors meeting with seniors via email, Zoom, and phone as much as possible to ensure college readiness for fall terms. • Remote student contacts via School emails, Google Voice text messages, Google Hangouts, phone calls, and Zoom meetings. • Communication with colleges, universities and support programs regarding student status: registered, and pending vs. completed. • Regular communication regarding changes to CC, CSU, UC dates, deadlines and requirements. • Using senior surveys (college transition and financial aid) to follow up with students. <p>Challenges and Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some consortia experience challenges with professional staff who are 11-month employees and are off for the summer. • Most consortia use college success coaches and tutors to work with existing staff and will continue to focus on helping students towards fall enrollment.
<p>How do you perceive fall activities will change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for online or hybrid services with multiple options with financial aid assistance; from online appointments over Zoom to small groups in-person utilizing various classroom. • Expecting our services will be provided remotely in the fall. Many campuses have yet to determine their back to school plans.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services will be dependent on stages of opening access to the public. At this time, preparation for all options will be available. • Hiring and training will be conducted remotely. • College advising/Financial aid assistance will also continue to be remote. • Planning retreat for Cal-SOAP LA staff via zoom: July 13-17. • The program and staff will follow the lead of the employing colleges and district partners. • Workshops, advising and tutoring services will be created with remote implementation in mind. <p>Challenges and Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to students and school facilities (if any). Capturing and maintaining student attention without in-person contact. • Working with consortia partners to design replacement for Fall Higher Ed Week in a virtual format. • Some Cal-SOAP projects will not be able to host annual college and career fairs at local High Schools. • Developing plans to continue to reach families with important college and career information as noted previously.
<p>How will you provide financial aid and college preparation information to students and parents in the fall?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointments via Zoom beginning the month of March and if possible, in person options with social distancing for financial aid application completion. FAFSA completion and Cash for College workshops will be available virtually from October 2020 until July 2021. • Will develop and send prepaid envelopes, postcards and flyers. • The program will plan and implement virtual workshops, and create campaigns (virtual, marketing and mail) to promote the applications, requirements and deadlines. • Short videos/Short Pre-recorded sessions/Zoom workshops/Small group sessions in coordination with schools. • One on one communication via telephone calls, texts, and emails. • Work with high school and consortia partners to disseminate information. • Create online content that is accessible to student and families via YouTube and other online platforms. • Continue to work with campuses to identify the best online advising platform. • Collaborate with Commission staff and higher ed partners to help every senior file a FAFSA or a CADAA.