Item 5

(Information)

2021-22 FAFSA and CADAA outreach and communications update

SUMMARY:
The 2021-22 financial aid application season kicked off on October 1, 2021 with the opening of both the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the California Dream Act Application (CADAA). This item provides an update on Commission staff efforts to expand virtual communication and outreach programs to reach and assist students and families in completing the financial aid applications.

RECOMMENDATION:
This is an information item; no action is required.

BACKGROUND:
FAFSA and CADAA Outreach

As California's students continue to navigate the many layers of the current crisis — the global pandemic, digital learning, skyrocketing unemployment and an economic downturn — the California Student Aid Commission (Commission) is reinventing its traditional outreach programs to encourage more students to apply for financial aid in a virtual environment. It is more critical than ever to expand our partnerships throughout all communities to ensure families and students fill out the financial aid applications to improve college access and increase enrollment, particularly for hard to reach student populations.

Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, the Commission initiated a new virtual Train the Trainer program to provide Cash for College, FAFSA and CADAA training to new community partners, including community colleges. The training provides information on how to host a virtual Cash for College workshop and complete a FAFSA or CADAA application. This training program equips community partners with the tools and resources necessary to host their own Cash for College workshops. Commission staff have conducted several training webinars to date and plan to host ongoing webinars throughout the year. The goal is to assist 50,000 students in completing the FAFSA or CADAA application with the assistance of these new community partners and community college administrators.

The Outreach Unit has reached out to numerous community organizations to encourage them to register for the Train the Trainer program and host Cash for College workshops. The team is planning to organize large Cash for College events to provide the FAFSA and CADAA training to

students and families. Staff is also looking at establishing a Cash for College toll free number for parents and students to call in to get assistance in completing their financial aid applications.

The California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) partners have also kicked off their 2021-22 financial aid application season with Cash for College workshops and training for their partners. As they conduct their workshops, they are learning as they go and sharing best practices to better serve families and students. Commission staff will continue to partner with Cal SOAP project directors to increase the number of FAFSA and CADAA applications.

Communications

The Commission has launched a Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign dedicated to informing students about the financial aid available to them and encourages them to apply via the FAFSA or CADAA. The PSA campaign kicked off with Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis and will feature a diverse set of community leaders, social media influences, elected officials, as well as a few of our Commissioners. In alignment with the COVID-19 Student Survey, the Commission also launched the #CAStudentsSpeak campaign, which serves to amplify the student voice, emphasize the importance of financial aid, and remind students about applying for financial aid in a timely fashion.

The Commission is also in the final stages of development of its student-centered website refresh and the redevelopment of its social media channels.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

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