

Free Money is Still Available for College, but the Cal Grant Deadline is Coming up Quick

SACRAMENTO – The college acceptance letter came in the mail weeks ago and graduation is only a few months away, and you still aren't quite sure how you're going to pay to send your high school senior to college in the Fall. The good news is that Cal Grants are still an option, but the deadline is coming up quick. If your high school senior has a 2.0 GPA, meets certain financial requirements, and fills out the Cal Grant application forms by March 2, 2004, he or she can be eligible for up to \$9,700 per year to go to almost any California college. And that's free money, money that doesn't have to be paid back. The money can be used at most UCs, CSUs, private and vocational schools, and community colleges in California.

California parents who want to send their kids to college can turn to Cal Grants to help lessen the financial burden. "If students work hard in school and make good grades, the state will help pay their way through college," said Diana Fuentes-Michel, Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission, the state agency overseeing the Cal Grant program. "If you thought you couldn't afford it before, you can now with a Cal Grant."

The Cal Grant program is the California Student Aid Commission's merit- and need-based financial aid program. Last year more than 60,000 of California's high school seniors were awarded Cal Grants, and the good news is that the state wants to award this financial aid to even more students this year. To qualify, your teen must fill out the Cal Grant GPA Verification Form and the FAFSA (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and submit these forms no later than March 2, 2004. There are no exceptions made for late forms.

The FAFSA form, which can be submitted either online or on paper, can be obtained online, from a high school guidance counselor or the school office. It is important to note that this form cannot be submitted until January 1st and must be received no later than March 2nd. The Cal Grant GPA Verification Form is available at the school office. Your teen must fill out Section B and then return it to the office or guidance counselor for signature before mailing it in. If you need free help filling out the forms, there are workshops underway all over the state called College Goal Sunday. These workshops occur in the evenings or on weekends. For information on workshops in your area visit

www.californiacollegegoalsunday.com or call toll-free 1-866-476-8787 for event dates and locations.

The Cal Grant program is well worth keeping in mind, especially if you haven't yet begun to think about how to pay for your high school senior to go to college. Award amounts are based on family size, family income and the college your child is planning on attending.

For more information on Cal Grants, visit www.calgrants.org or call toll-free 1-888-CA-GRANT. To download a FAFSA form, visit www.fafsa.ed.gov. For information on applying to colleges in California, visit www.californiacolleges.edu.

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