

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January/February 2004

CONTACT: Carole Solov
(916) 526-7991
Gary Zavoral
(916) 446-9900

Want Free Money for College? Apply for a Cal Grant Before It's Too Late

SACRAMENTO – The college **acceptance** letter came in the mail weeks ago, **graduation** is only a few months away, and you're having so much **fun** during your senior year that the last thing you want to think about is how to pay for college in the Fall. Relax – you can still get a **Cal Grant**. But don't get too relaxed because you have a deadline to meet.

If you have at least a 2.0 GPA, meet certain financial requirements, and fill out the Cal Grant application forms by March 2, you, yes YOU can be eligible for up to \$9,700 per year to go to just about any California college. And that's free money -- money that doesn't have to be paid back. And here's some more good news, submitting the FAFSA (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid), the main form used to apply for a Cal Grant, also makes other kinds of financial aid available to you.

“If you work hard in school and make good grades, the state will help pay your way through college,” said Diana Fuentes-Michel, Executive Director of the California Student Aid Commission, the state agency that administers the Cal Grant program. “If you thought you couldn't afford to go to college before, you can 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, you must fill out the Cal Grant GPA Verification Form and the FAFSA and submit these two forms no later than March 2, 2004. Warning: There are no exceptions made for late forms.

The FAFSA form, which you can get online, from your high school guidance counselor, or school office, must be submitted between January 1st and March 2nd, 2004. You can get a jump now on the application process by logging on to www.fafsa.ed.gov and downloading the application. When it's time to submit the form, you can do it either online or on paper, but the online version is quicker and won't let you make any mistakes.

The Cal Grant GPA Verification Form is available at your school office or you can get it from your guidance counselor. It is your responsibility to fill out Section B and then take it back to the school office or your counselor for signature before you mail it in.

And help is available to fill out these forms! Several schools and community organizations organize evening or weekend financial aid workshops for students and their parents. At these workshops you can get help completing the FAFSA, plus there are financial aid professionals available to answer questions and provide additional information. To find out more about financial aid workshops, just log on to www.californiacollegegoalsunday.com or call toll-free 1-866-476-8787 for event locations and dates.

This program is well worth keeping in mind, especially if you haven't yet begun to think about how to pay for college. 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.

###