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TO: **Directors of Financial Aid** Texas Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education DeChà Reid FROM:

Director, Financial Aid Services

DATE: August 17, 2017

RE: FY2018 Welcome and Updates

As we begin the new fiscal year, the Office of Student Financial Aid Programs (SFAP) would like to provide institutions with a few updates and resources that can be used throughout the upcoming year.

2017 Resource Documents

Program Guidelines

The 2017-18 annual Program Guidelines were released as individual documents for each of the state-funded programs and are now available on the SFAP Information Website under Program Specific Information. The comprehensive document with all programs will be available by August 25, 2017 under the Resources section.

This year, the guidelines include **Additional Information** banners on the right-hand side and alert boxes throughout each document that provide examples to assist administrators with common questions or program specific scenarios. As with last year's guidelines, hyperlinks directly to the Texas Education Code (TEC) and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) are included. Using these links will ensure that institutions can easily access the program statute and rules that are required when administering state financial aid programs.

TEG Engagement Guide

The annual TEG Audit Guide has been changed to the TEG Engagement Guide to align with the "Agreed Upon Procedures" approach that many of the institutions auditors are currently using. While there are some minor changes to the document language and procedures, the overall intent of the guide has not changed and a results letter sample will be provided to assist institutions. The new guide will be sent out in a memo and also available on the SFAP website prior to September 1, 2017.

Institutional Calendar

The 2017-18 institutional calendar has been updated with deadlines and target dates for the year and is now available on the SFAP Information Website under the General Information section.

Requesting Program Funds

Alert! Comptroller Closure Notification: The Texas Comptroller's Office will be closed August 31 – September 4, 2017 in order to process end of year closeouts. Funds will not be paid until September 4 or later.

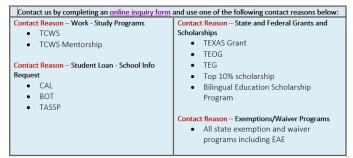
File and Funds Request

Institutions participating in the Toward EXcellence, Access, and Success (TEXAS Grant), Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG), and Tuition Equalization Grant (TEG) programs are highly encouraged to begin submitting a Funds Request Form (FRF) and Top Ten Percent (Top 10%) Scholarship Funds Request Files (FRF) now in order to begin processing payments once the 2017 fiscal year begins on September 1, 2017. Instructions for each of the funds request processes can be found by visiting the <u>SFAP Information</u> <u>Website</u>.

2017 Processing Changes

Customer Relationship & Feedback Tracking System (CRAFT) – Beginning **September 1, 2017,** the SFAP department will require online inquiries to be submitted using Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's CRAFT system through the <u>Contact Us</u> link. The CRAFT system allow the agency to track and monitor inquiries in more timely and efficiently and will help with compliance.

The traditional program email boxes that institutions and students used previously (i.e. TEXAS Grant, TEOG, TEG, TCWS, Grantinfo, etc.) will no longer be available. The email boxes will be disabled in the coming weeks so please make sure to communicate this change to those that could be impacted.



Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA)

Financial Aid Services (FAS) is requesting feedback from institutions for the 2018-19 TASFA. Your input and suggestions on TASFA is very important as it will allow FAS to make changes that will be beneficial to students as well as assist institutions with processing. Please forward suggestions by **August 18, 2017** using the <u>Contact Us</u> link and select "State and Federal Grants and Scholarships" in the drop down menu so that we may take your feedback into consideration for updates and enhancements on the 2018-19 TASFA. The 2018-19 TASFA will be available on **Monday, October 2, 2017**.

Reporting

Financial Aid Database (FADs) Reports

2017 Update Notification: An update to **Data Element 21c** (FILLER) has been made on the file layout on page 11 and in the instructions on page 25 in the 2017 FADs Instruction Manual.

Incorrect: Numeric

Correct:

Alphanumeric 41 character spaces, left justified Leave blank or use spaces Enter 41 spaces or leave blank

2018 Update Notification: An update to **Data Element 56** (Ministry-Related Degree) in the instructions on page 40 has been made in the 2018 FADs Instruction Manual to match the file layout on page 19.

Incorrect: 1 = No 2 = Yes Correct: 0 = No 1 = Yes

Training Resources

Attending Training

The Financial Aid Services team will be presenting at this year's TASFAA Conference which will be held in San Antonio. This year's state session will focus on the new 2018 FAD Report and allow institutions the opportunity to walk through the new 3-year submission process in more detail. THECB staff will be available to answer questions on new or modified data elements and discuss overall reporting requirements and file processing with administrators.

Requesting Training

The Financial Aid Service's team has a new <u>training request form</u> available. Interested institutions can submit a request to the Training and Communications group using an online form. A response will be sent to the institution or organization requesting the training in approximately 3 business days.

For any questions or concerns throughout the year, please contact Financial Aid Services at (844) 792-2640 or <u>Contact Us</u> (Select the "State and Federal Grants and Scholarships" option in the drop-down selection under **Contact Reason**).

cc: Ken Martin, Assistant Commissioner Charles W. Puls, Deputy Assistant Commissioner