

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board**

**Financial Aid Advisory Committee**

**Financial Aid Advisory Committee-Sub Committee**

**Legislative Proposals**

**Recommended Proposals**

- Align State aid programs satisfactory academic progress (SAP) criteria with that of the federal SAP requirements as defined by each institution's SAP policy. Alignment of SAP guidelines for state programs with Federal guidelines supports the completion goals in *60x30TX*, as Federal SAP guidelines measure both qualitative and quantitative progress for students. This approach, by aligning the federal and state SAP financial aid program rules, will reduce related confusion among financially-needy students (i.e. Increase their access to a higher education)
- Eliminate the separate confirmation of conviction for offenses involving controlled substances for state aid programs and rely solely on the related question on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (question 23 on the 2018-2019 FAFSA). The federal process enables oversight involving controlled substances for students receiving aid. Align TASFA application question on controlled substance convictions to that of the FAFSA. Allow institutions to use the same process of resolution as required for federal aid programs. In doing so and supporting *60x30TX* goals in educating students and completion of higher education by students, as Federal guidelines allow for drug rehabilitation programs. Students would follow one rule for federal and state programs in relation to any drug conviction. This approach would reduce related confusion among financially-needy students (i.e. increase student access to a higher education), (i.e. cost to the state).
- Align the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG) Program matching requirement (19 TAC Section, 22.260) to that of the TEXAS Grant Program matching requirement (TAC, Section 22.234). This would allow the Federal Pell Grant to be used to match the TEOG grant in covering tuition and required fees, allowing additional resources to be awarded at community colleges via the TEOG Program.
- Align Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG) Program with college cost. Community Colleges dependent on this grant in order to increase enrollment and retention rates: which is pertinent in terms of *60x30TX* goals in educating students and completion of a higher education by students.
- Appropriate sufficient funds (similar to the Federal Job Relocation and Development Program, where schools receive some funding to support student employment office campus) for new staff at each participating campus to effectively administer the requirements of the relatively new off-campus component of the Texas College Work-Study Program. This recommendation is due to the serious challenges institutions are experiencing with attempting to implement the recent statutory change (i.e., requiring off-campus employment). Engaging with the community increases opportunities for students to find meaningful work and work associated with their majors. The challenges are due, in large part, to:
  - Lack of necessary new staff position at all participating campus, which is critical to developing and maintaining relationships with off-campus employers and to administering this component of the College Work-Study Program; and the availability of appropriate employment, opportunities within distances that students are willing to commute.
- Secure authorizations for THECB, as the state agency for higher education, to administer an electronic Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) and relevant data transmissions to institutions of higher education (similar to the FAFSA administered by the U.S. Department of Education). Support in this area will allow students a one-stop shop for application for state aid programs, which can reduce inability for students to apply for state aid and/or work with multiple schools. An electronic TASFA

application hosted by THECB will further open access to funding for students who are seeking state aid, supporting *60x30TX* Educated Populations and Completion, ease of applying for students, and allowing for efficiencies in timely notices of aid eligibility. Manual processes typically result in incomplete applications which results in students not completing their application fully, which results in students not receiving funding for college. Electronic implementation and data transmission initiatives would ease the application process for students and allow for efficiencies in timely notices of aid eligibility (i.e. increase student access to higher education)

- Secure appropriations and authorization for THECB to centralize the functions required of institutions under SB887. This measure will ensure students receive more comprehensive information, regarding their student loans and the elimination of business inefficiencies (redundancy) across the state.
- Monitor changes to federal aid programs/processes as it may be necessary to consider changes to state aid allocations/processes. Loss of federal dollars would significantly affect college affordability. Rethinking state aid allocations for schools and state aid program rules-should be a priority as we learn more about federal aid changes.

### **Appropriations Proposals**

- Review timing of appropriations as the early FAFSA and earlier awards timing necessitates knowing allocations sooner than we have known in the past
- Increase funding for the TEXAS Grant Program to allow student award “targeted amount” to increase from \$5000/year, to \$7000.00/year. This increase is more in alignment with the programs’ intent (i.e. to assist financially needy students in covering the full cost of their tuition and fees) and will prevent the recommended amount from becoming a de minimis award that no longer has a positive effect on assisting student in accessing a higher education.