

WHAT SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND HIGH SCHOOLS CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE FINANCIAL AID PROCESS FOR LOW - INCOME STUDENTS

Challenge 1. Low Awareness about Financial Aid: Low-income students have little familiarity and instrumental knowledge of financial aid resources to pay for college.

Solution: Require students to pass a two-page, online quiz on the costs of attending the University of California, California State University, independent college and universities, or California community college and the various forms of financial aid that can be used to pay for each.

Challenge 2. Lack of Access to Internet and Email: Postsecondary institutions and financial aid providers increasingly rely on online application processes and the use of email.

Solution: Give students a functional school district-authorized email account that allows attachments to be used when applying for college and financial aid including sending attachments.

Challenge 3. Technological Overload during Peak Times: A lack of computers with internet connections and printers during high volume college admissions and financial aid application periods overloads the system.

Solution: Have a mobile computer lab with high speed internet connections and printers available from November through March.

Challenge 4. Need to Obtain Timely PINs: The PIN process necessary to apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online before the application deadline takes several days.

Solution: Require each student who will apply for federal aid at the beginning of the fall term to secure FAFSA PINs.

Challenge 5. Not Having Applied for Financial Aid: All low-income students applying to college should apply for financial assistance.

Solution: Make graduation from high school for college-bound seniors contingent on having applied for some form of financial aid (e.g. federal, state, or private sources of aid).

Challenge 6. Lack of Information by School Staff about Special Populations: California guidance counselors, teachers, and other school staff are not aware of Assembly Bill 540 and how it impacts undocumented students.

Solution: Educate guidance counselors and teachers about Assembly Bill 540 and how it makes college more affordable for undocumented students.

Challenge 7. Lack of Information by Special Populations about how to Acquire Financial Aid: Undocumented and foster care students lack information specific to their needs for college and financial aid.

Solution: Provide financial aid resources and additional assistance specific to foster care and undocumented students (i.e., scholarships that do not require U.S. citizenship, legal permanent residency, or a social security number).

About CHEPA

The Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA) is an interdisciplinary research unit led by Director, William G. Tierney, and Associate Director, Adrianna Kezar. The Center was established to engage the postsecondary-education community actively, and to serve as an important intellectual center within the Rossier School of Education; it draws significant support and commitment from the administration. The Center's mission is to improve urban higher education, strengthen school-university relationships, and to focus on international higher education, emphasizing Latin America and the Pacific Rim. Working on fulfilling that mission are the Center's faculty, research assistants, and staff. We are currently involved in a three-year study of college access and financial aid for low-income students, a multi-year investigation of governance and decision-making in higher education, a study on ways to increase the diversity of faculty, and a project that will provide ways to increase the transfer rate of urban community college students to four-year institutions.

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Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based, private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through grants for research, innovation, communication, and evaluation, as well as policy education and leadership development, Lumina Foundation addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, particularly underserved student groups, including adult learners. The Foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. For more details on the Foundation, visit its Web site at www.luminafoundation.org.

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