Federal Policy and Advocacy Update

(Provided by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Information current as of June 6, 2024).

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA) UPDATE

As of May 21st, more than 9.9 million FAFSA forms have been submitted for the 2024-25 award year, with applications being processed within one to three days of submission. Also this month, the United States Department of Education (USED) announced that it had completed reprocessing FAFSA forms impacted by known issues with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data, which should enable all institutions to package financial aid. It also announced changes to allow applicants and contributors without a Social Security number to immediately access and submit the online form. Lastly, USED announced a multi-million dollar grant program to help school districts, state, nonprofits and other public and private organizations with efforts to boost FAFSA completion. The FAFSA Student Support Strategy funds will help grow capacity for organizations to expand the availability of advisers, counselors, and coaches to support students and contributors through FAFSA applications. USED's announcement regarding the grant program is available [here](www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-launches-next-phase-fafsa-support-strategy-boost-completion-rate-among-high-school-students) (www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-launches-next-phase-fafsa-support-strategy-boost-completion-rate-among-high-school-students).

ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

On May 20th, USED released a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) regarding the recent gainful employment regulations finalized in September 2023. These regulations impose important compliance obligations on certain programs offered by private and some public higher education institutions. For community colleges, this only applies to nondegree granting programs that lead to licensure.

These new rules change how school programs are eligible for Title IV funds. Under old regulations, schools' non-degree programs were allowed to have up to 150% of their home state's minimum hour requirements. The new regulation limits the allowed program length to 100% of the state's minimum requirements. Failure to comply with this new regulation can result in a loss of Title IV funding. USED's FAQ on the gainful employment rules can be found on their [website](www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2024/certification-q-and-a.html) (www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2024/certification-q-and-a.html).

LEGISLATION UPDATE

On May 23rd, the House Agriculture Committee held a markup of the House Republican's proposal, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024, which would reauthorize the Farm Bill. The bill has bipartisan support but some Democratic resistance over proposed changes to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's (SNAP) Thrifty Food Plan and removal of climate fund protections from the Inflation Reduction Act. While no amendments were presented, House Democrats are anticipated to try to remove these controversial clauses. The measure also provides community college agriculture grants for workforce training, education, research, and outreach. Additionally, the bill proposes an earnings disregard for SNAP participants in subsidized work-based learning programs,

preventing loss of benefits mid-program. It also mandates the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to guide states in identifying and notifying college students eligible for SNAP, addressing food insecurity among students.