Students First Alliance:
Restore Our Cal Grant – An Investment That Works

STUDENT TOOLKIT 2014
Students First Alliance: Restore Our Cal Grants

Toolkit for Cal Grant Students and their Families

**WHO:** More than 32,500 California students at private, nonprofit colleges and universities count on the Cal Grant to help pay for college.

**WHAT:** The Legislature and Governor adopted three consecutive reductions to the Cal Grant maximum for students attending the private, nonprofit sector in the 2012 Budget Act. For the 2014-15 academic year, the decrease to the Cal Grant maximum award is **11.3%,** **from $9,084 to $8,056** for new incoming students. This budgeted change would reduce the award by 17% from the 2011 maximum and put financially deserving, academically qualified students at risk of not being able to obtain a college degree.

The Governor's proposed Cal Grant cut will apply to all incoming AICCU Cal Grant students. Cal Grant students at the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) institutions are not being targeted for reductions.

**WHEN:** The state adopted this $1,028 cut for all new AICCU Cal Grant students beginning in Fall 2014.

**WHY:** In 2012, when the state was grappling with a severe budget deficit, the Governor proposed significant cuts to the Cal Grant program. In the Budget Act, the Legislature adopted two consecutive years of cuts to the Cal Grant maximum award (2013-14 and 2014-15), but the Governor used his blue pencil authority to reduce the award in the 2012-13 by 5% for both new and existing students at the time.

**HOW:** *You can help reverse the cut.* Legislators and the Governor need to hear from those most affected by this proposal—students, their families, and campus communities. Call, email, or write your legislators and the Governor and tell them not to further cut the Cal Grant for students at AICCU schools. Share how the Cal Grant award makes education possible, and that a $1,000 cut is devastating when every dollar counts to students. Our average Cal Grant A family’s income is $41,000. Further, financial need does not distinguish itself on whether you attend a nonprofit or a public university.

**WHAT NOW:** Join the *California Students First Alliance to Restore Our Cal Grant!* This Student Toolkit includes information, resources, and talking points you need to **take action today.**
Background

The Cal Grant program, administered by the California Student Aid Commission, was created in 1955 to provide state grants to qualified California students enrolled at private, nonprofit colleges. Only after UC and CSU began charging fees did the Cal Grant program expand to students in all sectors of higher education. For 59 years, the Cal Grant program has been a partnership between the state and AICCU members to efficiently use tax dollars and nonprofit capacity to educate California students. The state recognized that the availability of high-quality nonprofit colleges in California saved the state money when students enrolled in them instead of public institutions.

The California–AICCU partnership works! Together, the Cal Grant program and financial aid provided by AICCU members have enabled hundreds of thousands of academically qualified, financially deserving students to earn a college degree. California is the beneficiary of this successful partnership because it creates an educated population at a lower cost to taxpayers.

The proposed 2014-15 budget threatens this partnership. The state adopted a cut to the maximum Cal Grant award from its current $9,084 to $8,056 for incoming students to AICCU institutions for 2014-15, and the Governor’s proposed budget does not stop the cuts even though the California economy has improved and there is the demand for reinvestment in higher education. The proposed maximum award would be 17% less than the amount that Cal Grant students attending private, nonprofit institutions received in 2011-12 and 11% less than 2012-13. The maximum award amount for students at AICCU institutions has not increased in over 13 years, making it—in inflation-adjusted dollars—worth 35% less than what it was in 2000.

Restore Cal Grants & Reinvest in California's Future!

Key Messages:

- California's economy is improving and it is time the state reinvested in the Cal Grant program for students that choose to attend a private, nonprofit college or university. The ability of students to earn a college degree and compete in the world economy is fundamental to California’s continued economic recovery and growth.

- Reducing the maximum Cal Grant for students attending nonprofit colleges puts their futures at risk. AICCU Cal Grant students are diverse, have an average family income of $41,000 (Cal Grant A) and a proven track record of success.

- Cal Grant students defy graduation statistics. Sixty-two percent of AICCU Cal Grant students graduate in four years, compared to an overall average four-year graduation rate of 54%. This is on par with the UC’s overall four-year graduation rate and is higher than rates at CSUs, at is 16%.
The California Legislative Analyst Office’s (LAO) Budget Overview (lao.ca.gov/publications/detail/2558) has asserted that reducing the maximum award for AICCU Cal Grant students could result in greater costs to the state if students shift enrollment from nonprofit to public institutions. The state’s investment in financially needy students at private, nonprofit institutions (from Cal Grants) is substantially lower than the total cost California expends when Cal Grant students attend a UC or CSU.

The Cal Grant program is a long-term, proven public-private partnership that works. AICCU institutions contribute more than $1.4 billion in campus-based financial aid to deserving students. With the declining value of the maximum award for AICCU Cal Grant students since 2000, combined with this proposed cut, the state is treating Cal Grant students in one sector—with excellent student success results—unequally to similar students in the public sector.

The current Cal Grant maximum for AICCU students needs to be the floor of state support if California is going to meet its workforce demands without building new UC and CSU campuses. The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) estimates that by 2025, California will be short 1 million college-educated workers.

AICCU colleges and universities are committed to California—about 70 percent of our 176,000 undergraduate students California residents.

**Restore Our Cal Grant Campaign Action Plan and Timeline**

**Goal:** To protect the current maximum Cal Grant award for students at AICCU institutions by continuing to educate policymakers and the public about the value California receives by investing in financially deserving students at nonprofit colleges. An aggressive student-centered campaign will help assure that legislators reject the 2014-15 proposed cut and fully restore the funds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governor released budget</td>
<td>Budget overview hearings &amp; analysis of budget bill</td>
<td>Student Lobby Day &amp; Assembly Overview Hearing</td>
<td>Senate Budget Sub. Hearing (Date TBA)</td>
<td>Budget conference committee meets. May Revisions released</td>
<td>Budget bills sent to floor. June 15: budget deadline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Governor proposed the 2014-15 budget in January and there was no change to the 11% cut to the Cal Grant that was previously adopted. The Legislature is expected to adopt a spending plan by June 15. Budget Subcommittees will begin hearing the Governor’s budget proposals in March. Both the Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees need to reject the Governor’s proposed cut. Then the full Budget Committees and both the Assembly and Senate must also reject the cut.
Strategy = Effective Advocacy

There are now over 32,500 AICCU Cal Grant students—and tens of thousands more Cal Grant alumni. To successfully fight the proposed Cal Grant cut, students must raise their voices. They need to be organized, diverse, and constant. To help them, AICCU has formed and continues to support the California Students First Alliance.

The California Students First Alliance is comprised of students, Cal Grant alumni, student-run organizations, alumni; college presidents, trustees and regents, faculty members, and education, religious, and chamber-business groups. AICCU will also pursue media opportunities to generate interest and support among Californians.

The California Students First Alliance coalition will meet with representatives of the Governor’s Office and Legislators (in Sacramento and in districts) to advocate for maintaining the current maximum Cal Grant of $9,084, oppose the cut to $8,056, and to educate policymakers about the negative impact California faces if the cut stands. Messaging will include sending an online petition; sharing YouTube video testimonials of “What My Cal Grant Means to Me;” student government endorsements; and media coverage.

Quick research to get started

Find your elected officials. Visit www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html and enter your ZIP code. You can enter the ZIP code for both your home and institution. This information is also available at the California Students First Alliance website.

Other useful links:
- Governor
- State Senate
- State Assembly

Legislator visits by students, AICCU member presidents, and trustees in their District Offices are essential. Please schedule now if you have not already met with your Senate and Assembly representatives for your campus.

Student visits to the State Capitol to meet with legislators on March 11 for the AICCU Day in the Capitol and to provide testimony before key budget committees are needed. We need your help to activate your friends and family members around Cal Grants to “Restore Our Cal Grant,” to “Fund Students First,” “Private Student, Public Good,” and to “Stand for California’s Future”—the wider our reach is, the greater our impact!

Take Part in AICCU’s ANNUAL LOBBY DAY!

Be a student representative during the AICCU Day in the Capitol on March 11 and meet with legislators. We need every institution represented!
What You Can Do Today to Restore the Cal Grant Program

**Step 1:** Go to the California Students First Alliance website (www.studentsfirstalliance.org) to find the latest information about the efforts to stop the cuts, letters, and other resources. Be sure to ask your friends and family to visit the site as well.

**Step 2:** *Build a Community.* Recruit friends and family to join the California Students First Alliance!

- Work with your Financial Aid Office to identify other Cal Grant recipients at your school. A collective student voice is stronger than any one person's. Spread the word and invite friends, colleagues, alumni, and family to get involved.
- “Like” the “Students First Alliance: Restore Our Cal Grant” on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/StudentsFirstAlliance
  - Write your story on the wall!
  - Promote the “Students First Alliance: Restore Our Cal Grant” site on Twitter and Facebook.
  - Use hashtags #aiccu #calgrants and #cahighered when posting
  - Repost and retweet information about Cal Grants.
  - Upload a video testimonial (30-45 seconds) “What My Cal Grant Means to Me”

**Step 3:** *Contact Your Legislators.* Find your elected State Assemblymember and Senator. To find your legislators, visit http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/ and enter your address. If you enter the address for both home and school, you can contact all of the identified legislators.

**Step 4:** *Tell Your Story.* The best voice in support of Cal Grant funding is the student voice. The most important thing to talk about is your personal story. Take some time to think about what a college education means to you and how the Cal Grant has helped. Include information about what you are doing and what your school is doing to help you pay for college. If you don’t know what aid you receive, you can check with your campus financial aid office.

When you communicate with legislators or the press—in person or in writing—always give a brief description of your college experience, major, and career aspirations; include the importance of your Cal Grant in helping you to reach your goals.

**Step 5:** *Take Action Today.* Write letters of support and schedule visits with your legislators. If you can't meet with legislators, meet with their staff. Reach out to your elected officials through email, letters, phone calls, and in-person meetings. The opinions that count most to legislators are those of the people who live in their districts!

---

**Sign the Cal Grant petition!**

Go to: www.change.org/petitions/governor-brown-ca-legislature-protect-our-cal-grant and sign the Cal Grant petition. The link is also on the California Students First Alliance website. Ask your friends and families to sign too! The more voices that stand up and take action for Cal Grants the better the chances of those voices being heard! Remember: It’s your Cal Grant. Stand up for it!
Writing Letters

Letters to Legislators and the Governor: The best way to contact the Governor or your legislators is to write a personal letter telling your Cal Grant story. A letter-writing component should be included in every activity you sponsor. In the next section, you will find a key list of legislators. It’s most important that you contact the legislator who represents you at your college address and home address.

Letters should be brief, concise, and neat. State your message clearly at the start of the letter (“I’m contacting you because I want you to vote to save Cal Grant funding”). Then give the details of your personal story (“I am attending college today because of the Cal Grant aid I receive”). Keep it short, and don’t forget to include your return address. While you can mail your letter, it is best to use email or fax to deliver. Please send copies of all letters to AICCU so we can also hand-deliver them.

Visiting Your Elected Officials

Visit with your legislative members and keep in contact with them. Any time you travel to Sacramento, be sure to schedule a meeting with your legislative member, or the staff members responsible for higher education issues. Legislators also have time for constituents on Thursday afternoons and Fridays when they’re in their district. Invite them to campus to meet with you.

Make an appointment: Call your legislator’s Capitol or district office and ask to speak with the scheduler. Explain that you are a concerned student and want to meet with your representative to talk about Cal Grant funding and the importance of student aid. If the legislator is not available, make an appointment with the legislative assistant who covers education or budget matters instead. They understand the issues you are concerned with, and will make sure your message gets to the legislator.

Be prepared: Go into the meeting with specific information and examples of how Cal Grant funding has made a difference for you. And bring fellow Cal Grant students to tell their own personal stories.

Be brief: Respect the busy schedules of legislators and their staff. A typical appointment might be about 20 minutes. Do not overstay your allotted time and always thank them for their time.

Follow up: After your meeting, write a note to the legislative members and the staffers with whom you met. Thank them for their time, and reiterate why Cal Grant funding is so important.
### Key Policymakers that Need to Hear From You

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Governor and Lieutenant Governor’s Offices</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Brown (to send an email, go to: <a href="http://gov.ca.gov/m_contact.php">gov.ca.gov/m_contact.php</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin Newsom (Lieutenant Governor) (<a href="mailto:gavin@gavinnewsom.com">gavin@gavinnewsom.com</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>California State Senate</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(to contact Senators, go to: <a href="http://senate.ca.gov/senators">senate.ca.gov/senators</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) Chair, Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Marty Block (D-San Diego) Chair, Budget Subcommittee on Education and Member, Committee on Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), Senate President Pro Tem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>California State Assembly</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(to contact Assemblymembers, go to: <a href="http://assembly.ca.gov/assemblymembers">assembly.ca.gov/assemblymembers</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblymember Nancy Skinner (D-Berkley) Chair, Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblymember John Perez (D-Los Angeles), Speaker of the Assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi (D-South Bay), Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is pleased to provide this Toolkit. Visit aiccu.edu and studentsfirstalliance.org for updates, sample letters and other resources.

For questions and concerns, please contact:

Kristen F. Soares  
President  
ksoares@aiccu.edu

Veronica Villalobos  
Vice President of External Relations  
veronica@aiccu.edu

Thomas Vu  
Director of Institutional Relations  
thomasv@aiccu.edu

Danyelle Norman  
Director of Research and Publications  
danyelle@aiccu.edu