

# Financial Aid Quarterly

Issue No. 2

Winter 2010

## From the desk of the Director

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • MERCED • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Dear Students and Parents:

With the start of the new year comes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) season. As a reminder, the FAFSA is an application that needs to be completed each year a student is enrolled to qualify for any form of federal, state or university financial aid.

There are three major pieces of advice I offer to just about every student and parent I encounter. The first is simple; apply before the March 2nd priority filing deadline. The deadline is the same every year. Students and parents should know that filing after March 2nd will jeopardize a student's eligibility for certain types of aid. Due to the turbulent economy in recent years, the Financial Aid Office has had to look for ways to ration our finite funding sources and unfortunately it has become necessary to deny appeals for on-time status. This makes meeting the March 2nd deadline even more important this year.

Families often wonder how they are supposed to complete the FAFSA so early in the year, when in many cases they have not yet completed their income tax returns. It is highly recommended that you submit estimates of your income information by the priority deadline and then return to the FAFSA website at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) and make updates as needed. The most important part is getting the FAFSA submitted by March 2nd as complete and as accurate as possible.

My second recommendation is to apply even if you think you will not qualify for grants or need student loans. Several times a year we hear from families that have experienced some kind of unforeseen event that greatly impacts their ability to meet college expenses. Having a FAFSA on file can make all the difference and can alleviate unnecessary stress for both students and parents as they deal with the unexpected events life can throw at us.

Lastly, and perhaps the best bit of advice I can give to families who are completing the FAFSA is to ask questions. The FAFSA can be difficult and intimidating. The Obama Administration is currently making strides to rectify this, but it is still estimated that nearly one million college students across the nation fail to complete the FAFSA because they find it too daunting a task.

In an effort to assist students nationwide and simplify the process for FAFSA filers, the UCSB Financial Aid Office has designed a FAFSA tutorial. The tutorial will be posted to our website in late January and made available to all colleges and universities. If you still have questions after watching our FAFSA tutorials, please feel free to call our office. We have a very knowledgeable staff and they are eager to help you navigate the financial aid process as efficiently as possible. The Financial Aid Office wishes you a successful and prosperous 2010. As always, if we can assist you in any way, please feel free to contact us during normal business hours at (805) 893-2432.

Sincerely,

Michael M. Miller  
Acting Director, Financial Aid

## Furlough Closures

In accordance with University of California Furlough Requirements, the Financial Aid Office will be closed on the first and third Friday of each month (with the exception of December) during the 2009-2010 academic year. Front desk and phone services will be closed on the following dates:

- January 15
- February 5 and 19
- March 5 and 19
- April 2 and 16
- May 7 and 21
- June 4 and 18
- July 2 and 16
- August 6 and 20

We understand these closures will cause some minor inconveniences and the Financial Aid Office appreciates your patience and understanding during these mandated furlough days.

### JANUARY

- 1 - [2010-2011 FAFSA Available](#)
- 25 - [Winter Census Date](#)

### FEBRUARY

- 26 - [Computer Loan Request Deadline](#)



### MARCH

- 2 - [FAFSA Priority Deadline](#)
- 5 - [Spring Consortium Deadline](#)
- 15 - [Undergrad Spring Fee Deadline](#)
- 25 - [Grad Spring Fee Deadline](#)

### APRIL

- 13 - [Summer Aid Application Available](#)
- 16 - [Spring Census Date](#)



Kara Lopez

## The What's What of Cal Grant

Last year, over 5,500 students received the Cal Grant at UCSB. The Cal Grant assists students with paying their tuition and fees while attending college. This program is funded by the State of California and administered by the California Student Aid Commission. These awards do not have to be paid back and students can qualify for up to \$9700 a year.

New/Prospective students apply for the Cal Grant by submitting the FAFSA at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) and turning in their GPA to the California Student Aid Commission by March 2nd prior to their first college term. The GPA must be from the school of last attendance that holds a cumulative GPA.

Current first year freshmen or first year transfer UCSB students, who were not awarded the Cal Grant this

past year, can apply again by following the same instructions as the new/prospective students. As a courtesy to our continuing students, UCSB submits GPAs each year to the California Student Aid Commission for students that have completed more than 36 units here at UCSB.

There are several types of Cal Grant awards. If you are a recent high school graduate, meet all the requirements, and apply by the deadlines, you are guaranteed to receive an Entitlement award. If you are not eligible for the Entitlement award, you might be eligible for a Competitive award. The main difference is that the Competitive awards are not guaranteed. Listed below are the types of Cal Grants and their criteria for qualification.

### *Cal Grant A Entitlement Award:*

This award can be used for tuition and fees at public and private colleges, as well as some private career colleges. If attending a UC, the grant pays for systemwide fees. For the 2009-2010 school year this was in the amount of \$7788. To receive the Cal Grant, you need to be working toward a two-year or four-year degree.

### *Cal Grant B Entitlement Award:*

This award provides low-income students with a living allowance and assistance with tuition and fees. Most first year students receive the allowance of \$1551 for books and living expenses. After the freshman year, the Cal Grant B also helps pay for systemwide fees akin to Cal Grant A. For the Cal grant B, the coursework must be for at least one academic year.

### *Cal Grant C:*

This award helps pay for tuition and training costs at occupational or career technical schools. An award of \$576 award is for books, tools and equipment. You may also

receive up to an additional \$2,592 for tuition at a school other than a California Community College. To qualify, you must enroll in a vocational program at least four months long at a California Community College, private college, or a career technical school. Funding is available for up to two years, depending on the length of your program.

### *Cal Grant A Competitive Award:*

These awards are for students that are not eligible for entitlement awards and with a minimum 3.0 GPA who are from low-income and middle-income families. These awards help pay for tuition and fees at qualifying schools with academic programs at least two years in length.

### *Cal Grant B Competitive Award:*

These awards are for students with a minimum 2.0 GPA who are from disadvantaged and low-income families. These awards can be used for tuition, fees and access costs at qualifying schools whose programs are at least one year in length. If you get a Cal Grant B Competitive Award it can only be used for access costs in the first year. These costs include living expenses, transportation, supplies and books. Beginning with the second year, you can use your Cal Grant B Competitive Award to help pay tuition and fees at public or private four-year colleges or other qualifying schools.

As Californians, we are very fortunate to have such a beneficial program for our college students. Many students, who once thought college was out of their price range, are able to attend with the help of a Cal Grant. For further details, please visit their website at [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov) or contact the financial aid office on campus.

### Cal Grant Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Must be a California resident when you graduated from high school
- Must attend a qualifying California college
- Must demonstrate financial need
- Must have family income and assets below the established ceilings
- Must meet minimum GPA requirements
- Must have met U.S. Selective Service requirements
- Must be in an undergraduate degree program
- Must not have a bachelor's degree
- Must have a valid Social Security number
- Must not owe a refund to any state or federal grant, or be in default on a student loan
- Must be enrolled at least half time



## The Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan

Chances are you have heard about the University of California's new *Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan*. The 2010-2011 academic year will be the second year of this plan's existence and the UC system will promote the program to prospective and continuing students to ensure it is publicized. Below you will find some of the basic information regarding the *Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan*.

### To be eligible for the *Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan*, you must:

- Be a California resident
- Submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 2 and provide any additional documentation campuses may request by the specified deadline.
- Apply for a [Cal Grant](#)
- Demonstrate income below \$60,000 (\$70,000 beginning in 2010-2011) with financial need, as determined for federal need-based aid program
- Be in your first four years as a UC undergraduate (first two for transfer students)
- Meet other campus basic requirements for UC grant aid (for example, be on-time, be enrolled at least half-time during the academic year, meet campus academic progress standards, not be in default on student loans, etc.)

### How will the *Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan* reduce my costs?

- Under the plan, your systemwide fees will be fully covered by scholarship or grant money if you are in your first four years at UC (two if you're a transfer student).
- The plan combines all sources of scholarship and grant awards you receive (federal, state, UC and private) towards fulfilling this promise of covering systemwide fees. Thus, for example, if you receive Pell Grant, Cal Grant and private scholarships that do not fully cover your systemwide fees, UC grant money will make up the difference.
- Students with greater financial need can qualify for more grant support to help defray other educational expenses (like books, housing, transportation, etc.) In fact, UC currently provides grant and scholarship assistance averaging \$10,300 per student to 54 percent of undergraduates.

### How do I apply?

You do not need to fill out a separate application to qualify for the Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan. You will receive the benefits of the Blue and Gold plan automatically if you qualify.

Simply file a [FAFSA](#) and apply for a [Cal Grant](#) by the March 2 deadline of the year you plan to attend UC.

Excerpt courtesy of the [University of California Office of the President](#).

Nicole Dominguez

## University Scholarships

With the escalating challenges that the current economy poses to UC students and their families, the Financial Aid Office has seen an increase in the number of inquiries regarding scholarships. Students, both new and continuing, are actively searching for sources of need and merit-based scholarship funds. There are many available through outside agencies such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Rotary, the Elks Lodge, and other community based organizations. However, you may ask what scholarship money is awarded by the Financial Aid Office itself? UCSB has numerous scholarship opportunities. While many of these funds are administered by the Financial Aid Office, some are available directly through other departments on campus. It is recommended that students contact their respective educational departments and colleges to inquire about their own sources of available funding.

The UCSB Financial Aid Office awards two different types of scholarships: general scholarship funds available for continuing students (sophomores, juniors, seniors); and restricted scholarships awarded to new students and qualified continuing students who received the award in their first year. All students that submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each

year by the March 2nd priority filing deadline will be considered for scholarship support.

### GENERAL SCHOLARSHIPS (CONTINUING STUDENTS)

Continuing students who file an on-time FAFSA application, demonstrate financial need, and show strong academic performance are automatically considered for a general scholarship award. If it is determined that a student qualifies, the scholarship is awarded at the time the student receives their Official Financial Aid Award Letter. These particular scholarship funds come from various donors and endowments.

### RESTRICTED SCHOLARSHIPS

Restricted scholarships are awarded based on specific criteria established by the donor(s), such as academic interests and backgrounds. Incoming freshmen and transfer students complete the section titled "Scholarship Opportunities" in step two of the on-line admissions application, or section 12 of the paper application. Students are asked to indicate which eligibility codes apply to them. This information is verified by our office and the student is considered for a restricted scholarship. Again, the applicant must be sure to file the FAFSA by the March 2nd priority filing date and demonstrate financial need. Any new student who qualifies for a restricted scholarship will be considered in subsequent years while at UCSB, as long as they are on-time, have financial need, and show strong academic progress. Limited funds are available each year and it is important that you follow these tips to ensure that you will be considered for scholarships:

Tip #1 File your FAFSA on time each year- March 2nd is the priority deadline!

Tip #2 Do the best that you can academically as your GPA is a qualifying factor for continuing student scholarships.

For additional information, please visit the "Scholarship Info" section on our website at [www.finaid.ucsb.edu](http://www.finaid.ucsb.edu).



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA

**TWO THIRDS OF  
UC STUDENTS  
RECEIVE  
FINANCIAL AID.  
ARE YOU  
GETTING YOURS?**

All you have to do is fill out a FAFSA by March 2.

**FINANCIAL AID.  
GET YOURS.**

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)



Brenda Curiel

### Peer Advisors: The Front Line

"I love being a peer advisor. I get to help people everyday and I've learned a lot about how financial aid works." These words are from Christina Miranda, a second year veteran peer advisor. How many times have you waited in line and anticipated the help of an administrator only to reach the counter and see a smiling student waiting to answer your questions or concerns? Chances are that you encountered one of the many peer advisors that are currently working in our department. Although peer advisors are students like you, they possess a vast array of knowledge about Financial Aid processes. They serve as the primary contact with the public and are always willing to lend a hand. Peer advisors play a huge role within our office as they not only provide telephone and in-person advising, but they also resolve complex problems and offer options and solutions. Along with providing great customer service, they also stay updated on the latest Financial Aid news.

There are currently ten experienced peer advisors, also known as our veterans, in a group of sixteen. Our current veteran peers are: Naveed Karbassyoon, Maria Salgado, Christina Miranda, Pablo Lopez, Ashley Mejia, Rosemary Morales, Cesar H. Fernandez, Guadalupe Andrade, and Gabriela De La Cruz. What constitutes a veteran peer advisor you may ask? Peers earn their title of veteran peer as they have worked in the Financial Aid office for over a year. Not only do veteran peer advisors have the same duties as a new peer, but they have been capable of concurrently attending UCSB and working an average of 15 hours a week. They have excelled in both areas. Their

role as a peer evolves with time and experience into one in which others see as dependable and reliable. Veteran peers also take on leadership roles as they mentor new peers and establish professional relationships with them that grow and flourish.

Before a veteran peer is unleashed to help students and parents, they undergo a rigorous training cycle. The duration of their training cycle lasts from fall to spring quarter. Currently there are six new peers that are in the process of training. Our energetic and enthusiastic new group is: Kelly V. Curtis, Melanie Block, Alfredo E. Del Cid, Victor Villanueva, Chris J. Holloway, and Vickie L. Ye. With the addition of a new group our office is full of excitement and joy. Though their training ends at the end of spring quarter all the peers are continuously learning. The new peer group is showing an enormous amount of potential. They are bright individuals who possess the necessary skill set to provide the best possible customer service.

In order for the peers to reach their true potential, they are constantly challenged to think outside of the box. Like many of you they too ask for assistance with their financial aid concerns. This allows them to show empathy towards others as they try to view the obstacles you face from your perspective. Along with relating to students, peer advisors are genuine as they embrace their role with pride. We appreciate all of the hard work and dedication that all our peer advisors show. We praise and encourage them to pursue their present and future goals in life. A note of gratitude to all of our peer advisors, "You are all great and thank you for all your hard work!"

## Federal Tax Benefits

The Financial Aid Office is unable to provide students and parents with tax advice, but we would like to direct you to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website for more information on two federal tax credits that may interest you. Please contact a tax professional should you have questions regarding these federal tax benefits.

The Hope Credit is available for the first two years of at least half-time enrollment in post-secondary education. The Lifetime Learning Credit is available for post-secondary enrollment at any level.

These two federal tax credits may benefit you or your parents if the grants and scholarships you receive do not fully cover your fees. Both tax credits are tied to the tuition and fees paid for college tuition.

In addition, taxpayers may withdraw funds from traditional Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), without penalty, for their own higher education expenses or those of their spouse, child or grandchild.

Find out more about tax benefits from the [IRS website](#). See [Publication 970](#)

Jason Valencia

## A Happy New Financial Outlook

It's a new year. Heck, it's a new decade. It's the time to start fresh, start anew, start with a clean slate. Right? Not quite. Unless you're getting a federal bailout, you are likely entering the new year and the new decade with a portfolio of loans, credit card debt, and little in savings. Many of us have grown accustomed to borrowing more than we need or can handle and spending more than we have—and this became more apparent in the past decade than any other. The 2000s taught us a painful lesson in action (or lack of action) and consequences, and I need not get into specifics. It was a turbulent and exhausting decade, but we need to proceed into the new one headstrong. With the new year comes New Year's resolutions and what better time to resolve things and make changes for the better. Many will resolve to lose weight and exercise more. Many more should also resolve to reduce debt and save more. Let's all aim to be more financially healthy and help make the second decade of the 21st Century a prosperous one. Here are some tips to consider as you make financial resolutions for the new year:

### Start a Budget

Creating and following a budget will lead to better decisions: seeing your expenses on paper will make you think

twice before spending another dollar on something you really don't need. It will be harder to justify the purchase of a new Xbox game if you see how that purchase affects your ability to pay rent next month. The Financial Aid Office website offers a couple of Excel [budget](#) sheets specifically designed for UCSB students. Online banking tools are also great for tracking your expenditures.

### Pay Off Credit Cards

Even if you invest or keep cash in savings or money market deposit accounts, your returns from those investments will likely be less than the interest you pay on credit cards. Your wisest investment is to pay down credit card debt to reduce finance charges. Always pay more than the minimum; credit card companies calculate this minimum to extend your payments in order to boost their profits.

### Start Saving

You can start small but the mere practice of putting cash away is a great habit and every little bit helps. Better yet, set-up an automatic transfer to a savings or money market deposit account. Who knows? You might even forget about it and all-of-a-sudden, you have some cash stashed away for emergencies, graduate school, or a new computer. Shop around and look for the best deals and high interest rate returns. Some banks will even give you a cash incentive for signing up.

## Financial Aid Quarterly

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

#### Acting Director

Mike Miller

#### Co-Editor

Aprí Medina

#### Co-Editor

Jason Valencia

#### Contributors

Brenda Curiel

Nicole Dominguez

Kara Lopez

Joey Rutherford

#### Contact Information

Financial Aid Office

UC Santa Barbara

2101 SAASB

Santa Barbara, CA 93106-3180

### Maximize your Credit Score

Review your credit score regularly (a few times a year should be enough) and make sure your credit report is clean. Be sure to pay your bills on time (late payments more than 30 days can hurt you), keep a manageable number of credit cards (no more than two), do not apply for too much credit in a short amount of time, and check your credit history for inaccuracies. You may check your credit report and credit score for free at:

[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

[www.creditkarma.com](http://www.creditkarma.com)