

the institute for
college
access & success

Hopes & Hurdles:
California Foster Youth and
College Financial Aid

www.ticas.org

October 2009

Web Seminar Technical Details

- Click on the unique link forwarded in the Go To Webinar email invitation
- To access audio,
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 - Enter Access Code: 631-702-965
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Panel Presenters

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Debbie Frankle Cochrane and Laura Szabo-Kubitz,
The Institute for College Access & Success

Max Espinoza, Office of CA Assembly Speaker Karen Bass

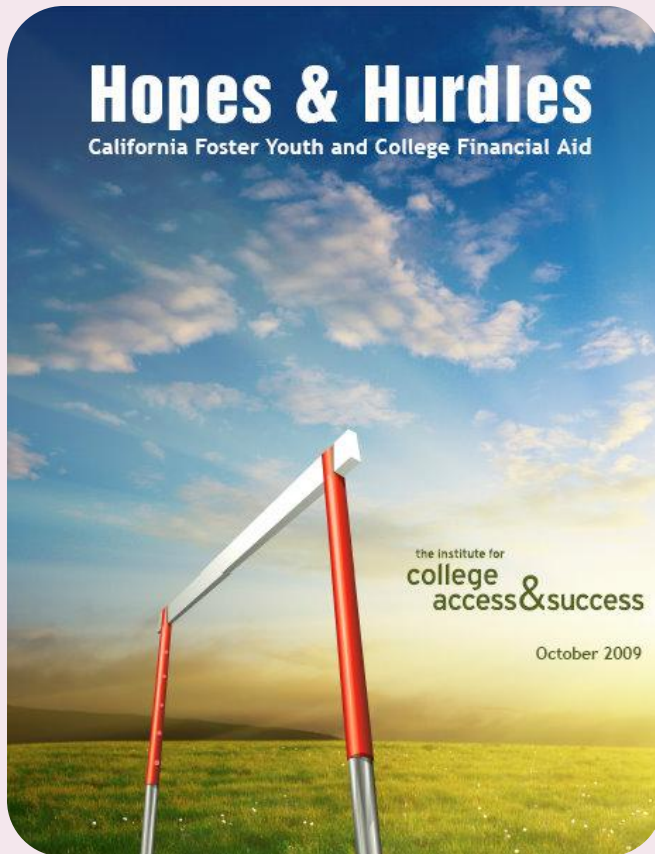
Margaret Mann, Santa Rosa Junior College

Michael Copenhaver, Grossmont College

Moderator: Jenny Vinopal, CSU Office of the Chancellor &
California College Pathways

Research Focus

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The types of financial aid available to help former foster youth access and succeed in college, and the extent to which youth are accessing them.

Methodology

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- Analyzed financial aid programs and data from state, federal, and private sources
- Held discussions with experts in the foster care field, including social workers, nonprofit leaders, college administrators, and government officials
- Convened focus groups and held follow-up interviews with former foster youth

Major forms of aid foster youth could have received in 2008-09

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	CCC	CSU
Federal Pell Grant	\$ 4,731	\$ 4,731
Chafee Grant	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Cal Grant	\$ 1,551	\$ 4,599
TOTAL MAJOR GRANT AID	\$ 11,282	\$ 14,330
COST OF ATTENDANCE	\$ 16,188	\$ 18,636
UNMET NEED	\$ 4,906	\$ 4,306

Grants for Foster Youth, 2008-09

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Of identified California former foster youth aid applicants:

84% were eligible for a Pell Grant

17% were offered a Cal Grant

9% received a Chafee Grant

Less than 4% received all three grants

Foster Youth Aid Packages at Two CA Colleges

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	CCC	CSU
Total cost of attendance	\$ 15,100	\$ 21,100
Average grant aid received	\$ 5,800	\$ 13,000
Unmet need after grants	\$ 9,300	\$ 7,700*

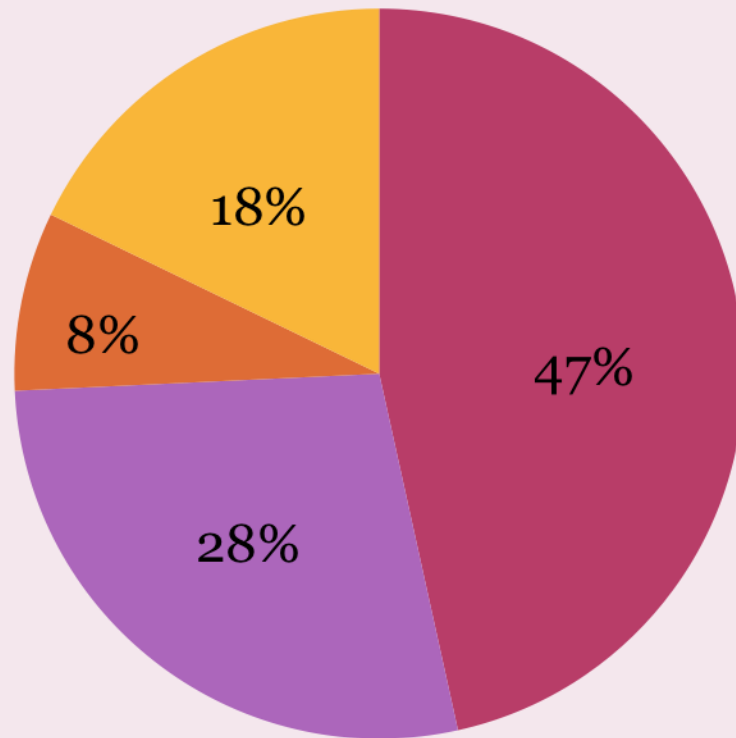
Additionally, 42% of students at the CSU received FWS and 33% took out federal student loans, compared with less than 10% of students at the CCC who received either

* Unmet need does not equal costs minus grants because some students had non-zero EFCs

Source: Authors' calculations based on student-level financial aid information for the colleges' identified foster youth, 2008-09

Of 6,751 complete Chafee Grant applications* ...

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- Received a Chafee Grant
- Not sufficiently enrolled at time of offer
- Did not meet other eligibility requirements
- Lack of funding

* For 2008-09. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

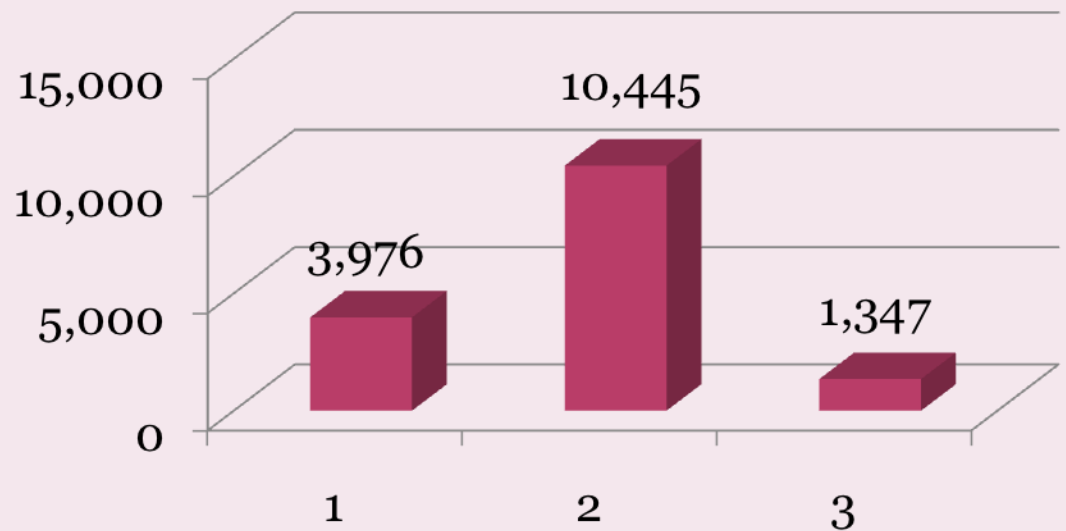
Plus 15,768 Incomplete Applications

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A complete Chafee Grant application includes four items:

- FAFSA
- Record with the Department of Social Services
- Chafee Grant application
- Needs Analysis Report (NAR)

Incomplete Applications by the Number of Missing Pieces (2008-09)



Hurdle One: Applying for Financial Aid

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Lack of awareness of financial aid and college going path

The financial aid application itself

Early state deadlines and additional requirements

Hurdle One: Applying for Financial Aid

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*“They expect you to write all these great essays and to get all these great scholarships, and it’s like, **what tools have you given me to get these great scholarships since I’m moving from house to house to house, and I’m asking for extensions all the time, and then you know I’m trying to do well.**”*

Hurdle Two: Qualifying for aid

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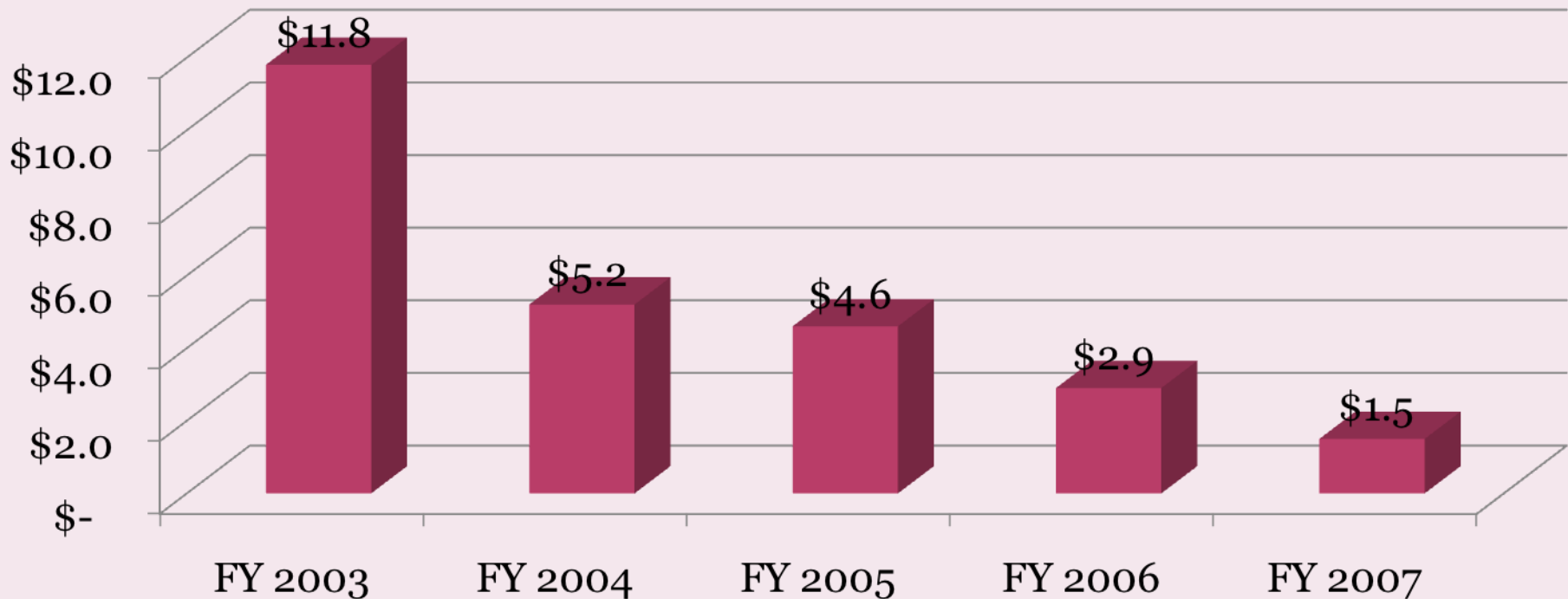
Aid programs do not fit foster youth enrollment patterns

States turn students away from Chafee Grants
while giving money back

Chafee Grant Fund Returns

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Total Chafee Grant dollars returned to the federal government, in millions (all states)

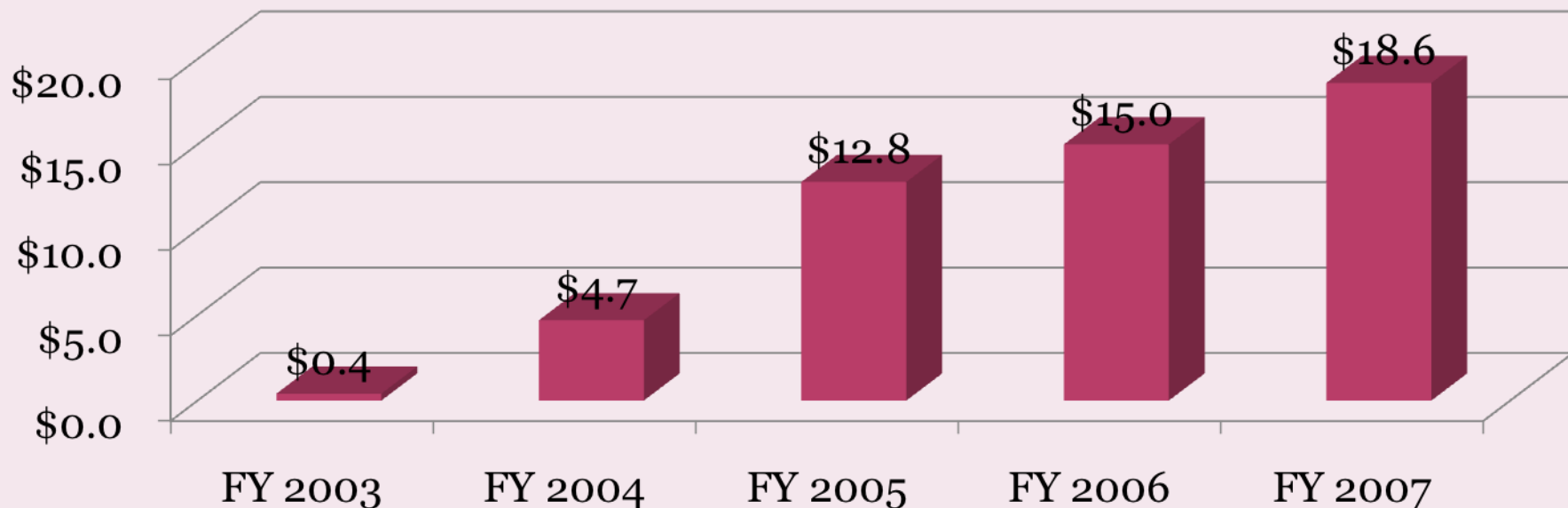


Source: Authors' calculations based on data provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Additional Chafee Grant Funds Requested

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Approximate total request for additional federal funds, in millions (all states)



Hurdle Two: Qualifying for aid

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*“It was a letter awarded to me that said you have **\$5,000 in Chafee, go pick it up from school.** And then I went to the school and they said that **I couldn’t get it, they said they sent it back** to the program ... I think they said that I wasn’t enrolled in class, but I was enrolled in 12 units.”*

Hurdle Three: Getting through the Process

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Verifying foster youth status

Knowing what to do and where to go

Hurdle Three: Getting through the Process

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“They had asked me for a letter to basically prove that I’m a ward of the court... I remember just running around and around and around. I had to work to get the financial aid.”

Hurdle Four: Timing of Aid Receipt

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Impacts of late aid on students

Challenges specific to Chafee Grants

Budget Stalemates

Hurdle Four: Timing of Aid Receipt

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“My check didn’t get delivered on time. I was really thinking, what did I get myself into? I didn’t have any way to contact anyone. I went to the financial aid office, I’m like, I have no money, is there any way I can get any help? And they said that your check is coming.”

Recommendations

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- Improvements to the federal Chafee Grant
- Improve Chafee Grant administration and outreach at the state level
- Guarantee Cal Grants for foster youth

Recommendations

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- Extend foster youth supports to age 21
- Provide supportive adults with training on college opportunity and affordability
- Create and expand specific, targeted programs on college campuses

Max Espinoza

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**Special Assistant and Senior Advisor,
Office of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass**

Margaret Mann

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Coordinator, Financial Aid & Outreach,

Santa Rosa Junior College

How SRJC identifies former foster youth

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- Self identification
- Letters
- Independent Living Program
- Front desk workers

What has worked for Margaret's students

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- Knowing that she's on their side
- Emergency loans just for former foster youth

Challenges Former Foster Youth Face

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- Lack of planning
- Registering late
- Applying for financial aid late
- Unsure what they want to study
- No money for books

Other Common Obstacles

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- No diploma or GED
- Housing and job issues

Reaction to Report Findings

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- **Not surprised:** issues are not school-specific
- **Disappointed:** worked with 8 students last year who were sure they were ILP eligible but were not confirmed to be; only 2 students managed to stay in the 5 months it took for the issue to be resolved and receive their Chafee Grant
- **Motivated to do more:** work offsite at a foster youth center run by foster youth; give presentations at group homes

Michael Copenhaver

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**Director, Financial Aid,
Grossmont College**

Observations on report

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- Reaction to student comments
- Other needs of the population

Outreach

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Identifying current and former foster youth
for your programs

Effective Strategies

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- Independent Living Skills (ILS) partnerships
- Combining resources during difficult budget times and meeting the challenges of continued service for foster youth students

Contact Information

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Announcements

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Hopes & Hurdles: California Foster Youth and College Financial Aid

- Copies of the report are available at www.ticas.org

2009 FYSI Excerpt:

- For a copy of this document: [Click Here](#)

Upcoming College Pathways Publications

- Winter e-newsletter, December 2009
- Annual Report, January 2010

Upcoming Web Seminar Training

- “Vital Documents and Identity Theft”, March 2010

Question and Answer

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Here is your chance to ask our panel members questions. Please type your questions on the “Questions” section of your panel.