



December 31, 2018

Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President Pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Office of Student Assistance and Relief Annual Report

President Pro Tempore Atkins and Speaker Rendon:

This correspondence fulfills the requirements of Education Code section 94949.72(d) and 94949.73 for the Office of Student Assistance and Relief (OSAR) to provide an annual report and progress update in protecting students and conducting its mandated duties. The period covered in this inaugural report is for July 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018.

Background

SB 1192 (Hill, Chapter 593, Statutes of 2016) established OSAR, which came into effect on July 1, 2017. OSAR's duties are to conduct outreach and provide information and assistance to students affected by a private postsecondary educational institution's (school's) unlawful activities or closure, and to serve as a primary point of contact to address the needs of students by working in consultation with state and federal agencies. The duties may also include conducting outreach to students and prospective students, and engaging in data and information research concerning industry trends and enforcement actions. The Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) and the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) worked closely to ensure OSAR was established, staffed, and ready to fulfill its mandates beginning July 1, 2017.

Summary

As discussed more fully below, OSAR has held school outreach events, closure events, and has succeeded in granting more than 1.8 million dollars in financial relief to students affected by the closure of private postsecondary institutions. OSAR is working with state and private entities, is conducting industry and enforcement-related research, and is developing its social media presence and web content to expand its ability to inform and serve California's students.



Closed School Outreach

The initial steps taken to create OSAR included building capacity and content to support students impacted by school closures. OSAR hired staff whose duties include facilitating closed school outreach events, developing and maintaining a stand-alone student-focused OSAR website, building and maintaining closed school content for the website, developing and updating outreach materials, updating BPPE's closed school packet, and creating new closed school outreach procedures.

OSAR has worked with DCA's Office of Public Affairs to develop social media pages on Twitter and Facebook, create an [instructional video](#) to explain the Student Tuition Recovery Fund (STRF), and assist students in completing the STRF application accurately and completely. Upon completion, the video was launched and distributed to OSAR's partner agencies, presented publicly May 15, 2018 at a BPPE advisory committee meeting, posted on the OSAR website and social media pages, and shown to students at all OSAR closed school workshops. This effort has assisted students in completing the STRF application, and increased awareness of OSAR.

OSAR also initiated a targeted outreach campaign to former students of Corinthian Colleges. This specific outreach was conducted through mail, email, telephone, and social media contact with former students of Corinthian Colleges over a four week period. The objectives of this campaign was to identify and connect directly with students who could receive economic relief under the expanded STRF eligibility parameters. There have been 103 applications for STRF benefits filed by former Corinthian Colleges students during the period covered in this report. In fiscal year 2016-17, the year immediately preceding the creation of OSAR, only 30 applications for relief were filed.

Through its closed school outreach efforts, OSAR has successfully advanced and advocated approval of 172 STRF claims for students from a variety of schools. The total dollar amount of the claims approved was \$1,881,589. OSAR has implemented a case management style approach to working with students, which emphasizes customer service and prioritizes identifying the maximum financial relief to which a student is entitled under the current statutes and regulations. This approach creates a connection with students early on to help build rapport.

Prior to conducting on-site closed school outreach events, OSAR staff first contacts all students named on the rosters provided by the school. If students are unable to attend in person, staff answers questions over the telephone, via email, in writing, or in other arranged one-on-one meetings. Similarly, if students plan to attend but then do not ultimately come to the workshop, OSAR staff follows up with those students individually to make sure all questions have been answered. All students attending a closed school outreach event are



assigned a specific analyst with whom they have already built a relationship to assist with their STRF claim.

OSAR conducted 12 on-site closed school outreach events during the time period covered in this report (see Chart A).

OSAR is pleased with the proactive approach toward closed school outreach, the individualized case management strategy it has adopted, its ability to plan and deliver workshops in a timely manner, the resources it has developed to help students impacted by closures, and its success in assisting students in accessing STRF and other relief programs. OSAR will continue to seek out opportunities for improvement in how it can best assist students who are impacted by school closures.

Student Point of Contact/Agency Partnerships

Developing and maintaining ongoing relationships with partner agencies and other stakeholders is key to increasing awareness of OSAR and its services, and the success of establishing OSAR as the primary point of contact for students of private postsecondary educational institutions in California. OSAR has either developed ongoing working relationships, or is actively seeking additional partnership opportunities with the following governmental agencies and other private and/or community-based organizations:

- Align Capital Region
- Breakthrough Sacramento
- California Colleges Guidance Initiative
- California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office
- California Department of Veteran's Affairs - California State Approving Authority for Veterans Education
- California Department of Veteran's Affairs - California Transition Assistance Program
- California State University, Chancellor's Office
- California Student Aid Commission
- California Workforce Association
- College Financial Aid Advisors
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- County Offices of Education
- Employment Development Department
- Foundation for California Community Colleges
- Goodwill Industries Jobs+ Program
- Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
- National Association for College Admissions Counseling
- Sacramento Employment and Training Agency



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- Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency
- San Francisco Office of Financial Empowerment
- South Bay Workforce Investment Board
- The Institute for College Access and Success
- University of California, Office of the President
- U.S. Department of Education
- Western Association for College Admissions Counseling

Additionally, when working on school closures and the development of outreach content for impacted students, OSAR has worked with accrediting bodies, other state and federal agencies not listed above, or DCA programs who have shared approval or dual licensing authority over the educational programs the school offered prior to its closure.

OSAR has also utilized its website, traditional media (radio, print, and television) opportunities, and social media to increase awareness of its other resources and services and to establish OSAR as the primary point of contact for students. Furthermore, in the first year, I have engaged in many face-to-face meetings, made presentations, facilitated workshops, attended conferences, trainings, local community events, interagency events, legislative hearings and briefings, participated in webinars, and made media appearances to increase OSAR's public profile as the primary point of contact for students of private postsecondary educational institutions. OSAR will continue to work to maintain existing relationships and build strong new partnerships with key organizations in the postsecondary sector.

Proactive Outreach and Research

OSAR has engaged in proactive outreach through participation in events organized or sponsored by OSAR partners. One of OSAR's key objectives for 2019 is to create, organize, promote, and deliver its own proactive outreach events. OSAR will also continue to participate in its partners' outreach events.

OSAR participated approximately 28 outreach events during the time period covered in this report (see Chart B).

Additionally, OSAR recently began conducting industry and enforcement-related research, which has resulted in some preliminary web content and public-facing frequently asked questions. The results have had an even greater impact on OSAR's internal knowledge and understanding of industry trends. With this key information, OSAR staff can better assist students in case management activities and provide more meaningful content when conducting proactive outreach or engaging with prospective students at college fairs and workshops.



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OSAR has also begun to identify staff as subject matter experts in international student affairs, student veterans, financial aid/financial literacy, community partnership development, and other key areas. Lastly, OSAR is working with BPPE's enforcement program to collect historical data showing the most commonly identified student complaints regarding schools' recruitment, admissions, and enrollment processes to better inform prospective students about what to consider before selecting an educational institution. OSAR will continue to make students its priority.

I appreciate the opportunity to share this information. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 574-7553 or Scott.Valverde@dca.ca.gov if you have any additional questions. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Scott Valverde
Chief, Office of Student Assistance and Relief

cc: Senator Steve Glazer, Chair, Senate Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development
Senator Connie Leyva, Chair, Senate Committee on Education
Assembly Member Evan Low, Chair, Assembly Committee on Business and Professions
Assembly Member Jose Medina, Chair, Assembly Committee on Higher Education
Alexis Podesta, Secretary, Business, Consumer Services, and Housing Agency