Financial Aid Awareness Month: Seeking Ways to Pay for college

Feb. 3, 2014 – Austin, Texas – February is Financial Aid Awareness Month – a busy time of year for high school seniors. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) reminds students and families to apply for financial aid as early as possible. Meeting an institution’s priority deadline better positions a student for maximum aid consideration. Deadline dates can be found on the institution’s website or by contacting the institution’s financial aid office. However, in Texas, nearly half of high school seniors do not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), therefore limiting themselves on potential financial aid dollars and relief from high college costs.

To help increase FAFSA completions, the THECB and TG will host a series of College Access and Affordability Telethons, an annual event that provides television viewers with information about student financial aid, including help with understanding and applying for federal and state financial aid. The telethons will be broadcast on the following dates and times:

- Wednesday, Feb. 5 on KXLN-TV, Houston Univision, 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 12 on KLTV-TV/KTRE-TV (Tyler/Longview/Nacogdoches) 4 p.m., 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 18 on KUVN-TV, Dallas/Fort Worth Univision, 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 19 on KSAT-TV (San Antonio) 6 a.m., 11 a.m., 4 p.m., 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 10 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 26 on KCBD-TV (Lubbock) 5 p.m., 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Student financial aid programs are available to eligible incoming and returning students enrolled full-time or part-time. All students considering higher education should apply by submitting the FAFSA application. The FAFSA is the U.S. Department of Education’s mechanism to determine a student’s ability to fund higher education and is critical for determining eligibility for federal and state student financial aid programs. To apply for financial aid consideration, students and families must complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Submitting a FAFSA is a critical step in obtaining federal and state aid for students.

In addition to the telethons that will help educate students and families, TG, the THECB and TASFAA are also providing regional training to assist Texas financial aid professionals in having the most up-to-date information available to ultimately help students and families. High school counselors play an important role in helping students fill out the form and complete the financial aid process, which may include a verification process at the institution. Counselors have access to track the submission and progress of the FAFSA for their students through the ApplyTexas Counselor Suite that provides high school counselors and administrators with online access to status information regarding which of their students have completed a FAFSA for the upcoming school year. This useful follow-up tool was first provided to Texas counselors during the 2012-2013 school year, and will provide FAFSA status weekly from February 2014 through the remainder of the academic year.

Students, parents and counselors wanting to learn more about current financial aid programs can visit the website CollegeforallTexans.com – one of several available resources in a full suite of online tools to help navigate the pathway to higher education that includes GenTX.org, CompareCollegeTX.com and ApplyTX.org.

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**THECB Mission:** The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's mission is to work with the legislature, the governor, governing boards, higher education institutions, and other entities to help Texas meet the goals of the state's higher education plan, Closing the Gaps by 2015, and thereby provide the people of Texas the widest access to higher education of the highest quality in the most efficient manner.

THECB