

# The SallieMae Fund

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*Contact:* Jason Kinney  
(916) 266-4575

## **The Sallie Mae Fund Launches \$1 Million Campaign to Increase Access to College for California's Minority Students**

*New Study by Tomás Rivera Policy Institute at USC Shows Lack of Financial Aid Awareness is a Barrier to Higher Education for Latinos*

**SACRAMENTO, Calif., Dec. 19, 2005** –The Sallie Mae Fund today announced the launch of a \$1 million campaign to raise awareness about college financial aid options among California's minority communities to help many more students open new doors to college.

At a press conference today at Hiram W. Johnson High School, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, State Secretary of Education Alan Bersin, and Director of the Governor's Initiative to Turn Around Schools, Margaret Fortune, joined Sallie Mae Fund leadership to unveil the details of the new million-dollar statewide campaign, which is aimed at narrowing the college financial-aid information gap that keeps many qualified minority students out of college.

"We've found that an insufficient understanding of the college financial aid process continues to be an all-too-real barrier to entry for California's minority students," said Kathleen deLaski, President of The Sallie Mae Fund. "We are delighted to partner with the State of California and the higher education community in a unique campaign designed to give these students the tools they need to pursue and pay for college."

This unprecedented charitable commitment follows a new study released today by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) at the University of Southern California (USC) showing that Latino young adults who need college financial aid the most often have the least awareness of the financial aid process. This lack of awareness can lead to lower performance in school and decreased access to college.

"For many Latinos in California, a lack of awareness about how to pay for college and how to navigate the college financial aid process keeps the doors to higher education closed shut," said Dr. Harry Pachon, President of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.

According to the study (see *attached fact sheet*), commissioned by The Sallie Mae Fund, three out of four Latinos not in college cite a lack of financial aid as a reason for not attending. At the same time:

- Less than 20 percent of Latinos have an accurate perception of the costs of attending a University of California or California State University school.
- More than half of those surveyed erroneously believe that students have to be United States citizens to apply for college financial aid.
- Only 49 percent of all Latino young adults not attending college have ever heard of a Pell Grant, while only 55 percent have ever heard of a Cal Grant.

The new million-dollar campaign – the "One Million Dollars for Access" program – will fund a series of education-focused initiatives throughout the state, including:

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- A three-year commitment to the Kids2College partnership between TRPI and the Cal State Chancellor's Office. In this pilot, Cal State Los Angeles and Cal State Fullerton will help TRPI implement the Kids2College 6-session curriculum for up to 3,000 sixth-graders each year.
- A commitment to help the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) provide training for an additional 2,000 parents across California. PIQE is nationally recognized as a leading organization which trains immigrant parents on how to advocate for higher education for their children.
- Sponsorship of California Dollars for Scholars fund-raising walks at USC, University of San Diego and Cal State Fresno to help the organization expand its chapters statewide.
- A replication grant to Adelante Mujer—an annual conference serving 1,500 Latina high school girls north of San Diego—to help the organization expand to other cities in the state.
- A grant to the Hispanic Scholarship Fund at UCLA to help the university's scholar chapter assist Latino students in their transition to college.
- A grant to the University of Southern California's "SummerTIME" program—a summer writing boot camp at the USC campus for minority students accepted at the nation's top universities.
- A 10-city, "Paying for College" California bus tour to help students and their parents plan and pay for college. Workshops are hosted at each tour stop and scholarships are awarded to future college students.
- Distribution of free workbooks, DVDs and tip sheets on financial aid to California high schools in partnership with State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell.

"Fulfilling the true promise of California means that a college education must be attainable and affordable for every student willing to work hard to achieve it," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell. "Today's findings show that too many students in our state don't believe they can get into college or afford higher education. I'm pleased to help lead this effort with The Sallie Mae Fund."

"This study proves what many of us already know from experience: those students who need college financial aid the most often receive the least amount of information about the financial aid process," said Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez. "Language barriers can also widen the financial-aid awareness gap that separates the haves and the have-nots. I want to thank The Sallie Mae Fund for investing in a real solution."

Other findings of note from the TPRI study include:

- Nearly 15 percent of Latino students who are attending or had attended college were unable to name any source of financial aid (i.e. scholarships, , grants, work study, loans, etc.) while more than 40 percent of Latino students not attending college were unable to name any source of financial aid.
- Only 41 percent of Latino students knew the eligibility requirements for applying either for a Pell Grant or a Cal Grant.
- Only 40 percent of Latino students who attended college recalled applying for a Cal Grant.

"This new study shows why we need a united, statewide effort to remove barriers to college access for students from underserved communities," said Margaret Fortune, Director of the Governor's Initiative to Turn Around Schools. "When students believe that attending and affording a college education is too far outside of their grasp, they lose a strong incentive to achieve academically."

Following the press conference, The Sallie Mae Fund hosted a "Paying for College" workshop for Hiram W. Johnson High School students and awarded two \$1,000 college scholarships to two of the attendees.

More information on the study can be found at [www.salliemae.org](http://www.salliemae.org).

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**The Sallie Mae Fund**, a charitable organization sponsored by Sallie Mae, achieves its mission—to increase access to a postsecondary education for America's students—by supporting programs and initiatives that help open doors to higher education, prepare families for their investment, and bridge the gap when no one else can. For more information visit [www.salliemae.org](http://www.salliemae.org).

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