

“I **Can** Afford College” Campaign Fact Sheet

For 13 years, the California Community Colleges’ “I **Can** Afford College” financial aid awareness campaign has increased awareness that community colleges are affordable and financial aid is available year-round. The campaign has effectively connected Californians directly to financial aid resources and college financial aid offices. From Board of Governors Fee Waivers, grants and work-study programs, to scholarships and loans, more than 1 million students annually at the 113 community colleges receive federal, state and local financial aid to make their higher education dreams a reality – and many got started on their path at icanaffordcollege.com.

Campaign Effectiveness*

- Since the campaign’s inception, awareness about financial aid at community colleges has consistently increased.
 - Prospective students display the highest level of community college specific financial aid awareness, driven by high school students (67 percent in 2014 vs. 38 percent in 2012).
- Campaign messaging is also resonating with current and prospective students.
 - Among the campaign messages, "anybody can go to college" and "online sign-up to get financial aid" enjoy the highest awareness (76 percent and 73 percent respectively), followed by "help with fees, books and supplies" (64 percent).
- The “I **Can**” website enjoys strong ratings – especially around ease of use and finding relevant and helpful information:
 - 81 percent of prospective students reported it was easy to find information they were looking for on the "I **Can**" website.
- The most common activity “I **Can**” website visitors engage in involves filling out a financial aid application:
 - 64 percent of visitors fill out some kind of financial aid application.
- When exposed to campaign messaging, current and prospective students continue to be inspired to take concrete actions seeking financial aid.
 - Following campaign exposure, 40 percent of current students attended a financial aid event and 50 percent of prospective students enrolled at a community college.
 - Among prospective students, the most common steps were to visit a community college website (45 percent) and talk to a high school counselor (42 percent).
 - The campaign has been effective in influencing many students to apply for aid, with 40 percent of current students and 39 percent of prospective students completing the FAFSA after hearing about the campaign.
 - Additionally, 43 percent of current students 25 percent of prospective students went on to apply for the California Community Colleges Board of Governors Fee Wavier after being exposed to campaign messaging.

Campaign Reach

- Since the launch of the revamped “I **Can**” website in 2014, there have been more than 1 million unique users, which is more than double the growth of all previous years.
- The total number of unique visitors to the website since the campaign’s inception in 2003 is estimated at nearly 4 million.

- The campaign regularly connects with current and prospective students about the variety of financial aid options available not only via the campaign website, but also through myriad other communications outreach tools:
 - Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)
 - Opt-in email list-serves and text message campaigns
 - High school and community college campus newspapers
 - High school, community college, middle school, community-based organizations and faith-based organizations newsletters
- On an annual basis through paid media the campaign typically generates more than 213 million impressions:
 - Approximately \$2 million is spent on paid advertising to promote the campaign.
 - Over the life of the campaign, key relationships with media organizations have helped supplement the paid investment with value added opportunities.
 - In the 2013/2014 fiscal year, paid media campaign added value was estimated at \$2,075,576.

Funding

- Funding for the campaign has remained constant at \$2.8 million since the 2003/2004 fiscal year.
- The campaign has successfully leveraged in-kind contributions and coordinated with other marketing efforts, such as the Associate Degree for Transfer program. However, existing campaign funds cannot pay for the “**I Can**” activities that have been significantly decreased or suspended over the past few years.
- The campaign can buy only 66 percent of the radio advertising now as it did 10 years ago. Due to budget constraints, television advertising has been suspended as well as marketing efforts aimed at the parents of the 16- to 24-year-old primary audience.
- This reduced purchasing power has also forced the campaign to significantly reduce marketing efforts in smaller markets to one advertising flight per year, radically decreasing messaging to the re-entry audience of 25- to 54-year-olds, and ceasing production and airing of Spanish-language radio advertising.
- In addition, the campaign is forced to limit the number of collateral orders requests fulfilled each year, and the number of community, high school outreach and college in-reach events the campaign participates at is limited.

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