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## Financial Aid Awarding Differs between Like Colleges, Report Finds

*By Carina Zaragoza*

The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS) has found that student access to financial aid varies widely according to each institution. This may not seem too surprising given the maze that is financial aid. However, more interestingly, the report has found that similar institutions have varying financial aid policies. What is true at one community college might not be the case at another community college, the report found.

The report, "Green Lights and Red Tape," looked at 21 California community colleges across the state. TICAS examined several aspects of the financial aid services provided by each college, ranging from communication and information dissemination to outreach to minority students to basic administrative assistance.

Among the findings is the pressure financial aid offices face to provide appropriate information and assistance to their students while also meeting administrative demands. While all colleges may face institutional pressures and priorities, TICAS found that each college responds to these factors differently. The report's executive summary recapitulates this finding in simple terms: "The unofficial motto at one school's financial aid office is, 'When in doubt, give it out,' while an aid director at another school said, 'We are the police officers of Title IV funds.'"

A closer look at the practices at various community colleges revealed disparate treatment of funds and students. One college translates materials and forms into various languages that are known to be spoken by its student body. Conversely, another college "has materials only in English, despite having a large Latino population."

Another contrasting difference is the fact that many colleges work with faculty and staff to get information into the hands of students, while other colleges do not even publicize office hours.

The report goes on to provide several recommendations with the sole goal of helping students be successful at California community colleges. The recommendations are made to financial aid offices as well as state and federal agencies.

[Report on TICAS's Study](#)

[Green Lights and Red Tape](#)