
California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education

2012-2015 Strategic Plan



Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education

Message from the Bureau Chief

Since the landmark 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education, California policymakers have established access to affordable, high-quality postsecondary education as a statewide priority. As the needs of California students and employers have grown and changed, so has the landscape of institutions offering postsecondary educational programs. An increasing number of students are choosing to attend private institutions. Thus, the Bureau's role in ensuring the quality of these institutions has become vitally important for California's students, California's workforce, California's employers, and California's economy.

I believe that strategic planning is an essential component to the Bureau's success. By identifying and prioritizing our activities and objectives in a public document, we ensure that, across the Bureau, we are working toward the same clear goals and measurable outcomes, to the benefit of students, institutions, and the State.

I am pleased to present the 2012-2015 Bureau Strategic Plan.

*Laura N. Metune
Bureau Chief*

Oversight History

Beginning January 1, 1998, regulation of private postsecondary educational institutions was carried out by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (BPPVE), within the Department of Consumer Affairs. On June 30, 2007, following criticisms of inadequate student protection and overly burdensome regulations, the Legislature and the Governor allowed the BPPVE to sunset. Between July 1, 2007, and December 31, 2009, private postsecondary educational institutions existed in a regulatory dark period.

Enacted January 1, 2010, Assembly Bill 48 (Chapter 310, Statutes of 2009) established the California Private Postsecondary Education Act (the Act) and created the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (“Bureau”) to provide oversight of private postsecondary educational institutions operating in California. Specifically, the Act directs the Bureau to:

- ❖ Create a structure that provides an appropriate level of oversight, including approval of private postsecondary educational institutions and programs;
- ❖ Establish minimum operating standards for California private postsecondary educational institutions to ensure quality education for students;
- ❖ Provide students a meaningful opportunity to have their complaints resolved;
- ❖ Ensure that private postsecondary educational institutions offer accurate information to prospective students on school and student performance, thereby promoting competition between institutions that rewards educational quality and employment success; and
- ❖ Ensure that all stakeholders have a voice and are heard in the operations of and rulemaking process by the Bureau.

Bureau Background

While the Act became effective on January 1, 2010, it was not until passage of the 2010-11 Budget Act, on October 8, 2010, that the Bureau was appropriated funding to support its operations. An administrative hiring freeze significantly impacted the Bureau’s ability to fill positions. By January of 2011, the Bureau had filled 18 of approximately 60 authorized positions. In March of 2011, the Bureau’s Licensing Unit achieved full staffing. By January of 2012, the Bureau’s Enforcement Division was operative. In April of 2012, a Bureau Chief was appointed by Governor Brown. In May of 2012, with the hiring of the Quality of Education Unit, the Bureau achieved full staffing.

Today, with an authorized staff of 57, the Bureau processes licensing applications, conducts compliance inspections, and responds to complaints for the approximately 1,876 approved institutional locations throughout California, including 1,235 main campus locations, 287 branch locations, and 354 satellite locations. The Bureau also actively investigates and combats

unlicensed activity, administers the Student Tuition Recovery Fund, and conducts outreach and education activities for private postsecondary educational institutions and students within the state.

Bureau Mission Statement

The Bureau exists to promote and protect the interests of students and consumers: (i) through the effective and efficient oversight of California's private postsecondary educational institutions, (ii) through the promotion of competition that rewards educational quality and employment outcomes, (iii) through proactively combating unlicensed activity, and (iv) by resolving student complaints in a manner that benefits both the complaining student and future students.

Bureau Vision Statement

The Bureau strives to be the national leader in regulating private postsecondary educational institutions by setting standards in licensing, compliance, enforcement and outreach that ensure students are protected and approved institutions provide quality education and training programs.

Bureau Values

- ❖ **Accountability** – The Bureau is accountable to the people of California and will provide leadership in accountability by operating transparently and encouraging public participation.
- ❖ **Integrity** – The Bureau will be honest, fair, and respectful in making unbiased and impartial decisions, without favoritism or prejudice.
- ❖ **Consistency** – The Bureau will strive to apply the laws and regulations under its jurisdiction accurately and consistently throughout all units.
- ❖ **Professionalism** – The Bureau will strive to recruit, train and retain qualified, effective, dedicated and skilled staff members with a strong commitment to public service.

Goals and Objectives

The Bureau has adopted the following goals and objectives for 2012-2015. As part of the ongoing strategic planning process, these goals and objectives will be evaluated and adjusted, as necessary, to ensure the Bureau's oversight structure is meeting the needs of students, approved institutions, and the general public.

Goal 1: Licensing Unit

The Bureau will work to enhance and improve the licensing process to ensure that every institution issued an approval to operate is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Objective 1.1

Establish and adopt formal written procedures to ensure consistency and efficiency among licensing staff by January 1, 2013.

Objective 1.2

Review and streamline the approval to operate application process to eliminate backlog and achieve a 30-day initial application processing response cycle by January 1, 2013.

Objective 1.3

Review and streamline the renewal of approval to operate application process to eliminate backlog and achieve a 30-day initial application processing response cycle by January 1, 2014.

Objective 1.4

Review and streamline the substantive change process to eliminate backlog and achieve a 30-day initial application processing response cycle by January 1, 2014.

Objective 1.5

Organize and review licensing files to improve ease of access to historical records and establish paperless records retention policy and procedures where possible.

Objective 1.6

Continue to update and correct institutional information contained in the SAIL database to ensure accurate information is converted to the BREEZE system in 2014.

Objective 1.7

Establish and implement regular and ongoing in-service trainings for Bureau staff to ensure institutions, students, and consumers are provided with clear, consistent and accurate information from all Bureau staff by January 1, 2014.

Objective 1.8

Review the licensing and compliance inspection process to streamline and remove unnecessary duplication by January 1, 2014.

Goal 2: Enforcement Division: Complaints & Investigations Unit

The Bureau will strive to improve and expand the complaint process to ensure that student complaints are addressed and resolved expeditiously and fairly, consistent with the aim of enforcing state law and protecting students.

Objective 2.1

Establish and adopt formal written procedures by January 1, 2013, to ensure complaint investigators have the information and resources necessary to address and resolve student complaints, consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

Objective 2.2

Achieve a 180-day average timeline between the receipt and resolution of a complaint by January 1, 2013.

Objective 2.3

Foster collaborative relationships with federal, state, and local government agencies that share student protection oversight responsibility by establishing Memorandums of Understanding and information sharing processes.

Objective 2.4

Compile and maintain by January 1, 2013, a contact lists of current and prospective non-governmental partners with joint student protection authority.

Objective 2.5

Ensure prompt communication with complainants through a 10-day initial response cycle.

Goal 3: Enforcement Division: Discipline Unit

The Bureau will ensure full utilization of disciplinary authority provided in the Act to protect students and consumers from the unlawful actions of institutions.

Objective 3.1

Establish and adopt written procedures for the citation program by January 1, 2013.

Objective 3.2

Establish an in-house citation referral process to ensure citations are issued within two weeks of referral by January 1, 2013.

Objective 3.3

Ensure citations are thoroughly monitored and handled for compliance in a fair and timely manner.

Objective 3.4

Establish and adopt written procedures for the formal discipline and probation program by January 1, 2013.

Objective 3.5

Ensure formal discipline and probation cases are thoroughly monitored and handled in a fair and timely manner.

Objective 3.6

Continue to ensure public disclosure of final disciplinary actions by the Bureau through the posting of public record documents to the Bureau website within two weeks of service.

Goal 4: Enforcement Division: Compliance Unit

The Bureau will enhance and expand the role of compliance inspections in identifying and educating institutions about minor violations and in detecting and referring material and repeated violations for investigation and discipline.

Objective 4.1

Review and update as necessary the formal written procedures and the announced compliance inspection process by January 1, 2013.

Objective 4.2

Strive to ensure announced compliance inspections are completed within 4 ½ months of initial notification to the institution by January 1, 2014.

Objective 4.3

Establish and adopt formal written procedures for the unannounced compliance inspection process by January 1, 2013.

Objective 4.4

Establish a strategic and fair process for selecting private postsecondary educational institutions for announced and unannounced compliance inspections by January 1, 2013.

Objective 4.5

Establish ongoing information sharing and training procedures for inspectors to ensure that Bureau inspections are conducted fairly and consistently throughout Northern and Southern California by January 1, 2013.

Objective 4.5

Continue to ensure timely public disclosure of compliance inspection results by posting inspection public record documents on the Bureau website within two weeks of completed inspections.

Goal 5: Administrative Unit: Outreach and Consumer Education

The Bureau will establish a formal outreach and education program to educate students about the existence of the Bureau, its mission, the availability of the complaint process, and the Student Tuition Recovery Fund.

Objective 5.1

Audit the Bureau's website and achieve compliance with the website disclosure provisions of the Act by January 1, 2013.

Objective 5.2

Enhance and expand the Bureau website to ensure ease of access by students and approved institutions to Bureau information and updates by January 1, 2014.

Objective 5.3

Provide ongoing sharing of information and trainings for approved institutions through presentations, conferences, webinars, workshops, and regular website and email updates.

Objective 5.4

Utilize social media such as Facebook and Twitter, to share and disperse consumer information about Bureau functions and provide institutional updates for institutions and students.

Objective 5.5

Review Annual Report submissions and website posting procedures in an effort to increase ease of public access to public information contained in Annual Reports.

Objective 5.6

Establish a regular schedule for Bureau Advisory Committee meetings to provide a public opportunity for the Committee, approved institutions, and students to discuss issues of importance with Bureau leadership.

Goal 6: Administrative Unit: Regulation and Legislation

The Bureau will ensure continued evaluation and monitoring of the Act and its implementation; identified deficiencies will be shared with the Department of Consumer Affairs, State and Consumer Services Agency, the Governor, and the Legislature.

Objective 6.1

With the input of the Advisory Committee, monitor and evaluate regulation effectiveness after regulations have been promulgated.

Objective 6.2

With the input of the Advisory Committee, review new legislation and promulgate regulations as appropriate.

Objective 6.3

Communicate with partner agencies affected by Bureau regulations before, during and after regulations are promulgated.

Objective 6.4

Monitor federal regulations for possible impact on California's regulatory structure and communicate to students and affected private postsecondary educational institutions about the impact of new federal regulations.