

U.S. Department of Education Deploys Federal Personnel, Funding, and Resources to Support Colleges, Students, and Families with Better FAFSA®

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The U.S. Department of Education (Department) today released a FAFSA College Support Strategy to provide additional personnel, funding, resources, and technology to help schools and students complete the better FAFSA form and to help colleges prepare to process student records as quickly and accurately as possible. The Department's top priority is to ensure students can access the maximum financial aid possible to help them pursue their higher education goals and bring college in reach for more Americans. Since the new 2024–25 FAFSA form became available on Dec. 30, more than 3.6 million forms have been successfully submitted.

The Department's FAFSA College Support Strategy includes:

- Deploying federal personnel and expertise to help colleges prepare and process financial aid forms
- Directing funding for technical assistance and support for under resourced colleges

- Releasing tools to help colleges prepare to quickly and accurately process student records and deliver financial aid packages

“Make no mistake: the Better FAFSA is transformational,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “We are determined to get this right. We must, and we will. Our hope is that these steps we’re announcing today are going to go a long way toward helping colleges and universities make the most of the Better FAFSA.”

The Department’s FAFSA College Support Strategy will particularly focus on lower-resourced schools that may have a smaller number of administrative staff and may utilize older software systems. The Department’s goal is to not only deploy resources for colleges to accelerate the development of student aid packages, but also to make sure students have adequate time to make important decisions about their higher education options. As supported by the American Council on Education and others, the Department welcomes institutions providing students and families as much flexibility as possible and as much time as possible to review aid offers to make enrollment decisions.

Deploying federal personnel and expertise to colleges

The Department will be deploying federal financial aid experts to a group of lowered-resourced colleges to ensure these colleges have the tools and information needed to process financial aid packages, understand the steps they need to take to prepare, deliver direct on-campus support, and provide ongoing consultations and trainings as needed. Through this effort, the Department expects to serve Historically Black Colleges and Universities, tribal colleges and universities, and colleges that are lower-resourced.

The Department is also standing up a new concierge service within the office of Federal Student Aid, which will provide a broad set of colleges direct contact with financial aid experts to help to provide them personalized support based on an institution’s needs. These federal liaisons, many of whom are former financial aid professionals, will answer questions and connect colleges to available resources.

Providing funding for technical assistance and on-the-ground support

The Department is allocating \$50 million in federal funding that will be provided to non-profit groups specialized in financial aid support and services. These groups will use these funds to recruit financial aid professionals to provide additional technical assistance and support, beyond the federal teams deployed by the Department, for under resourced colleges. Participating colleges will receive additional staff support to

deliver services such as assessing financial aid system readiness and implementing necessary updates, training staff, developing aid packages, and carrying out other student aid compliance requirements. The federal funding will be administered by the Educational Credit Management Corporation and will engage experienced nonprofits like the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and the Partnership for Education Advancement.

Releasing data and tools to help colleges prepare to quickly and accurately process student records, deliver financial aid packages

The Department will begin releasing test versions of institutional student financial aid information records (ISIRs) within the next two weeks and will be actively working with financial aid system developers so that colleges and states can prepare their systems. These test ISIRs will enable colleges to prepare their own systems and processes to efficiently assemble aid packages.

On Friday, the Department began posting new data and resources to help schools drive FAFSA completion and improve the user experience for the new 2024–25 FAFSA. The Department released data by high school on their students' 2024–25 FAFSA submissions, two months ahead of schedule. Originally planned to be released starting in April 2024, the Department is now providing weekly updates to allow high schools to track progress, target supports, and encourage their students to submit a FAFSA form.

In addition, to continue to ensure the 2024–25 FAFSA form successfully improves the user experience—particularly for students and their families—the Department announced a new resource, at StudentAid.gov/fafsatips (<https://studentaid.gov/fafsatips>), that gives FAFSA applicants and contributors tips to help them successfully complete and submit the 2024–25 FAFSA form.

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