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U.S. Department of Education Announces Schedule and New Process to Launch 2025-26 FAFSA Form

AUGUST 7, 2024

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The U.S. Department of Education (Department) today announced that the 2025-26 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA® form) will be launched through a new process. Starting on October 1, the Department will release the 2025-26 FAFSA form for testing with a limited set of students and institutions. The Department will make the application available to all students on or before December 1. This process is informed by conversations and feedback from thousands of students, institutions, and other stakeholders.

The Department will invite volunteers to participate in the testing period, and over time will make the form available to an increasing number of participants, starting with hundreds and expanding to tens of thousands of applicants. This process will allow the Department to test and resolve issues before making the form available to all students and contributors. Using this approach, the Department will launch full functionality, including submission and back-end processing at the same time.

“Following a challenging 2024-25 FAFSA cycle, the Department listened carefully to the input of students, families, and higher education institutions, made substantial changes to leadership and operations at Federal Student Aid, and is taking a new approach this year that will significantly improve the FAFSA experience,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “Thanks to the partnership of our stakeholders, we’ve developed a better implementation process for 2025-26. I look forward to continuing to work with our partners to ensure this school year’s FAFSA implementation better serves our nation’s students.”

The goal of the phased rollout of the 2025-26 FAFSA form, consistent with software industry best-practices, is to work with limited groups of users to identify and resolve the kind of system errors that can derail millions of students and contributors and thousands of colleges. A phased rollout will also allow the Department to incorporate user feedback to ensure the application’s instructions are clear and easy-to-use for students and contributors and provide resources for the community that supports students and families.

Thanks to investments through the FAFSA Student Support Strategy and the partnership of community and stakeholders, student application success rates have significantly increased over the past six months, with the submission gap from the prior year falling from roughly 40% in March to under 4%, as of today.

“We’ve heard from students, families, higher education professionals and other stakeholders loud and clear: They want a better, simpler FAFSA process, and they want to know when they can reliably expect it,” said FAFSA Executive Advisor Jeremy Singer. “In close collaboration with partners, FSA is confident we will deliver not only a better product, but also a smoother process than last year. One that makes higher education more accessible and within reach for more Americans.”

Throughout the testing period, the Department will share regular updates with students, families and a broad range of community stakeholders to make sure they clearly understand our progress. This will also boost confidence among students and families, institutions, state agencies, and other partners and stakeholders.

Moreover, the Department will continue to seek feedback from our partners through August listening sessions and a new formal request for information that will be released next week. The Department will publish more about what it has learned through these engagements, including releasing a new roadmap with additional tools for students and families, counselors, institutions and other partners planning for a successful 2025-26 FAFSA season.

In the coming weeks, the Department will release more information about how this testing period will work. Our top priority is ensuring students have access to the maximum federal financial aid possible to reach their education goals, and we are working tirelessly to ensure students and our partners have a smooth experience with the 2025-26 FAFSA form.

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