



Navigating the New FAFSA

Post-Rollout Insights and Updated Guidance for
Enrollment Teams



- 1 **General Overview**
- 2 Recent News: Inflation Adjustment, Data Delays and New FAFSA Data
- 3 A Deeper Dive on Communication Guidance

Overview: Key Changes in the New FAFSA



The FAFSA will be **considerably shorter**, but **logging in may be more difficult**

The FAFSA will rely almost exclusively on information from a **family's recent tax return**

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) became the **Student Aid Index (SAI)**

SAI's are generally lower than EFC's, except in families with multiple students in college and those in high tax states

Overview: Highly Impacted Populations



Pell Grant Recipients

Notable increase in number of Pell Grant recipients

The New FAFSA will result in hundreds of thousands of additional grant dollars for college-bound students, distributed much more broadly than originally expected.

10-25% estimated increase in Pell recipients



Small Business and Farm Owners

Small business/farm assets considered in SAI calculation

Families who own a small business or a farm that also serves as their primary residence will now have the assets of that business or farm considered in their SAI calculation.

This could be a larger issue for **continuing students**



Multiple Students in College

Families with multiple children in college

New SAI methodology will no longer take this circumstance into account, meaning that SAI will be the same for each student regardless of how many family members are in college.

20-35% of enrolled students will be impacted

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General Overview

2

**Recent News: Inflation Adjustment, Data Delays,
and New FAFSA Data**

3

A Deeper Dive on Communication Guidance

Inflation Adjustment Announced

Impact Of Inflation Adjustment By Income

Income	SAI without Inflation Adjustments	SAI with Inflation Adjustments	Difference
\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
\$50,000	\$1,658	\$52	\$1,606
\$75,000	\$6,179	\$4,471	\$1,708
\$100,000	\$12,943	\$9,162	\$3,781
\$150,000	\$29,475	\$24,764	\$4,711

Immediate Takeaways:



Adjustment will result in **more students qualifying** for additional financial aid.



Two trade-offs are that it will mean **more delays** and **may result in increased aid awards/budget for institutions.**



May need to remind students that the SAIs they have received are "**pre-inflation adjusted.**"



While the NASFAA just released its new calculator last week, **it is still unclear what the exact impact of this change will be.**

Post-Processing Experience for Institutions, State Higher Ed Agencies, and Designated Scholarship Organizations

- Institutions, state higher ed agencies, and designated scholarship organizations will begin receiving batches of FAFSA information (ISIRs) starting in the first half of March. The information transmitted to schools will include the updated SAI tables.
- We are continuing to test several vendor built systems and we will provide regular progress updates to schools and stakeholders as we move forward.

Immediate Takeaways:



The Dept has confirmed for NASFAA that when they start releasing ISIRS, **it will NOT be by school; it will be by applicant.** So if Joe Student completed the FAFSA and had results sent to six schools, results will be sent to all six at the same time.



Students will be allowed to go in to make corrections first, once the ISIRS have actually been processed.



They have not yet specified when schools will be able to make corrections; they've only said it will be "weeks after" the ISIRS are released.

New FAFSA Data Paints Picture of a Slow Start

Key Takeaways

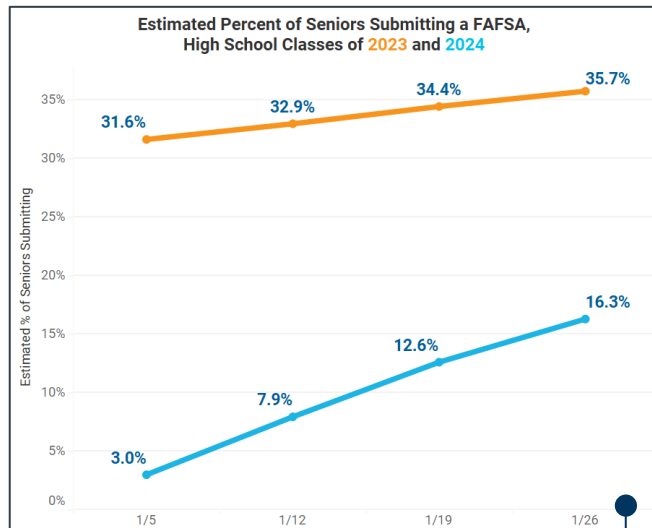
57%



Decrease in FAFSA submissions compared to last years seniors, with the national FAFSA submission rate standing at just 16% through January 26, 2024.



This cycle's start has **disproportionately affected** high schools serving **students of color and lower-income students**.

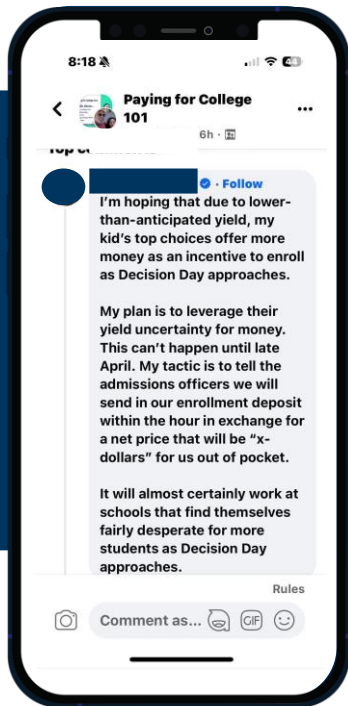


While FAFSA Submissions are undeniably down, **there is still time to change the trajectory**. One promising sign is pacing: relative to week four of last cycle (10/8/23), class of 2024 seniors are pacing about approximately 3% ahead.

Student and Family Reactions to Data Delay

Some families may come looking for a deal...

...while others may just entirely opt out.



"This is stupid,
never mind."

"Doing the
FAFSA just
isn't worth it..."

"Why do they
make paying for
college so hard?"

Communication



Resend Merit Notifications

Given the delay between merit and need, consider resending the initial scholarship/merit offer but make clear that it doesn't comprise the entirety of their package necessarily.



Reconnect with Parents

Parents aren't communicated with enough; make sure they are in the loop on everything related to aid awards. Consider adding an additional spring parent mailer.



Processes

Promise Aid Package Turnaround

Once patches are ready and data is flowing, consider promising an XX-day turnaround after future submissions.

Consider Deadlines

Move FAFSA filing priority deadlines if possible. The push from major orgs to move May 1 deadline will require a communication plan whether or not you move your deadline.

Potential for Refundable Deposit

Consider making deposit refundable before May 1 or within two weeks of receiving aid offer, whichever is later.

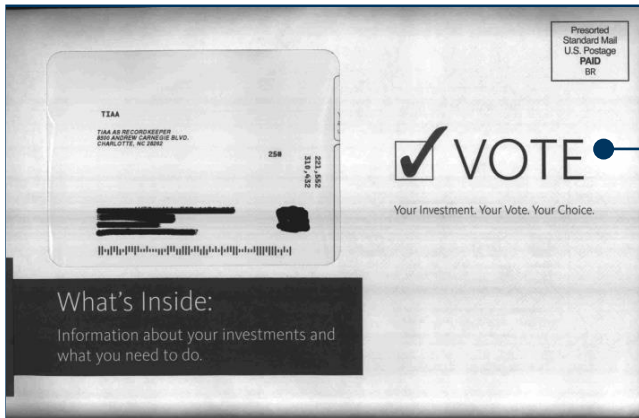
FAFSA Delay Considerations

In the Mailbox, Think Outside the Box



Use USPS
Informed Delivery

When aid packages are sent, work with your local post office to set up a rider ad in the informed delivery channel to engage with students and parents. Alternatively, put a message on the outside of the letter so parents know it's coming to the student.



Example:

Use outside of envelope to grab parent's attention, with messages like "Your Student's Financial Aid Offer Inside."

Reconnaissance



Survey for FAFSA Intel

Text or email admits to solicit a response surrounding FAFSA completion: Yes, No, I Need Help, I don't plan to file. Use this to triage the pool efficiently.



Review FAFSA Email Confirmations

Have families bring their FAFSA submission email confirmations and SAI estimate to campus. Consider manually estimated awards for campus visitors or at minimum having staff available for consultation.



Tap Third Party Data

Leverage third-party data to identify students more likely to qualify for need-based aid. This can help efficiently allocate sparse staff resources.



Staffing

Staff Events Proactively

Ensure aid staff is available to answer questions and to assist with completion. Cross-train admissions staff if possible.

Be Positive Externally but Vent Internally

Be there to listen and empathize with students and families. We don't want negativity hitting families any more and cause them to throw up their hands.

Yield Ideas



Campus Events

- Add additional admitted-student day(s) in late April or even early May
- Increase aid staffing to answer aid questions during events
- Cross-train admissions staff to answer more aid questions



Changing Deadlines

- At a minimum, communicate flexibility in deadlines.
- Consider if June 1 is right for you



Set Expectations

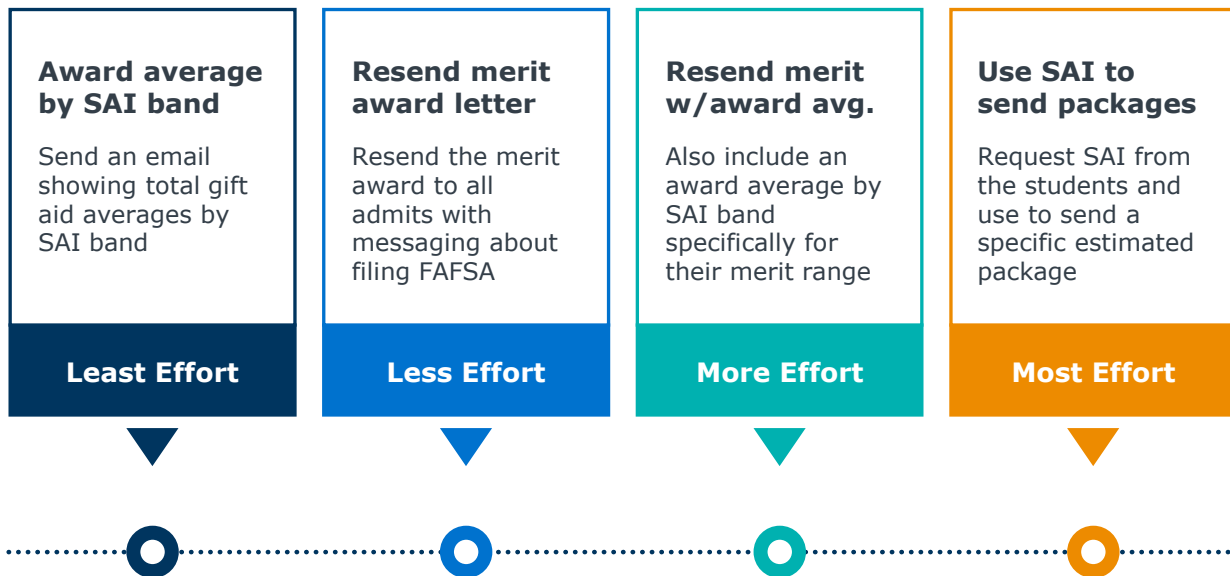
- Communicate how quickly you plan to send packages after receiving ISIRS
- Keep families informed about when you expect to send packages

Review FAFSA and aid communications through a recruitment lens. Ask yourself and your team:
"Does this remind students why we are a great choice for them?"

Communicate with Students on Aid Packages



Goal: Encourage FAFSA Filing and Sustain Interest



Reminder: All current SAIs are not inflation-adjusted (yet), which students may be unaware of.

The EAB Edge: Leveraging Data to Track Trends

Monitor and Predict Using Proprietary Third-Party Marketing Data

Counts

with an Enrollment Status of all*

Year	Census	2023 Census	2022 Year-to-Date	2023 Year-to-Date	2024
Cohort	#	#	#	#	#
A - Income less than 25,000	867	895	593	663	600
B - Income from 25,000-49,999	1,332	1,227	931	941	1,075
C - Income from 50,000-99,999	2,683	2,783	1,974	2,199	2,461
D - Income from 100,000-149,999	4,030	3,919	3,141	3,284	3,310
E - Income from 150,000-199,999	2,596	2,777	2,066	2,404	2,509
F - Income from 200,000-249,999	989	1,028	809	891	981
G - Income above 250,000	3,111	3,510	2,583	3,132	3,014

Best Practice from Out of Industry

Large-scale retailers use this type of data to customize outreach and targeted content to their customer base.

Valuable Insight: This Year and Beyond

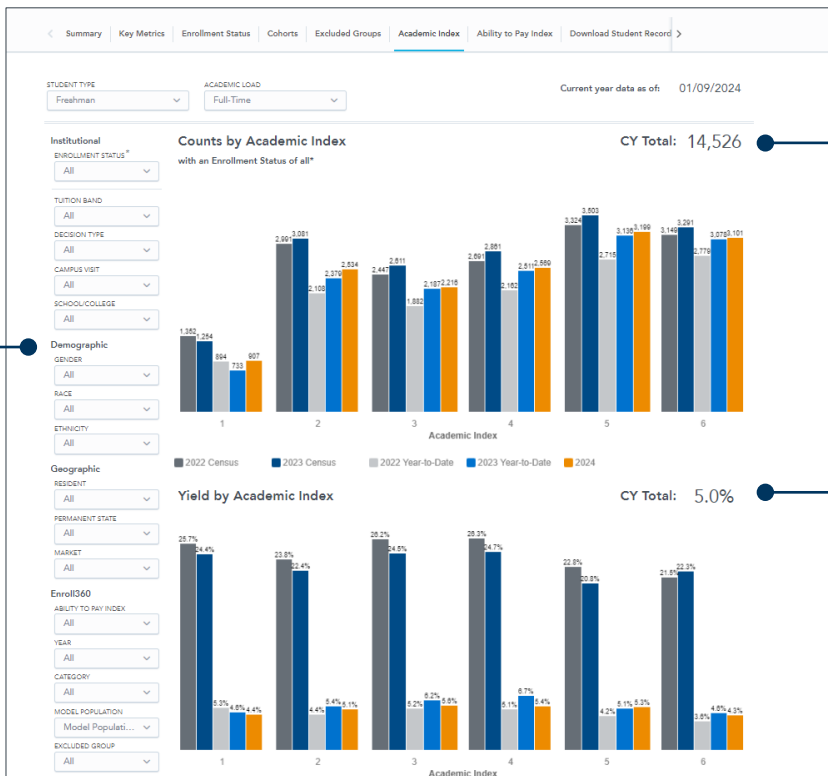
While income data is particularly valuable this year in helping schools monitor progress before FAFSA data becomes available, it will remain important in years to come for all students who don't file a FAFSA.

The EAB Edge: Leveraging Data to Track Trends

Data Dashboards with Extensive Demographic Filters and Key Trend Areas

Demographic Filters

Wide range of demographic filters, including race, gender, age, geographic residence, and more



Trend Areas:

Dashboards can feature distribution by academic quality with counts and yield, as well as discount rate and tuition revenue in the same place

The EAB Edge: Leveraging Data to Track Trends

Customize Tracking to Meet Your Institution's Unique Needs

Search...

Select all · Clear

- FAFSA Filers
- Non-Filers
- First Generation
- Students in Verification
- College of Aeronautics and En...
- College of Applied and Techni...
- College of Architecture & Envi...
- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Business Administra...
- College of Communication and...

Cancel Apply

Search...

Select all · Clear

- Asheville Market
- Charlotte Market
- Fayetteville Market
- Mid-Atlantic States Market
- New England States Market
- Other North Carolina Market
- Outside Markets
- Raleigh-Durham Market
- Wilmington Market
- Winston-Salem-Greenboro Market

Cancel Apply

Customized, Tailored Tracking

EAB tracks specific data points, customized by partners, to monitor not only if they are pacing ahead or behind but exactly where.

Pell - Eligible	
Pell - Min	
Pell - Max	
Num in College 1	
Num in College 2	
Num in College 3+	

Tracking for New FAFSA Data

EAB is using historical data in key categories such as Pell and Number in College to compare progress while tracking New FAFSA data.

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Differentiate Yourself with Your Response

Institutions should provide **proactive** and **empathetic** communication about FAFSA delays.
Examples of such communication include:



Inviting students and families to opt in for emails, texts, or calls when more FAFSA-derived information is available



Hosting online information sessions about affordability and financial aid resources



Staffing a hotline/online chat service to field questions students have while waiting



Providing a checklist that reflects both what families need to do and what they can expect from you

Given recent events, it is especially important to publish how best to get in touch with questions and concerns about aid and attending

Additionally, consider a message of support from senior leadership, as well as continuous encouragement for students to submit their FAFSA (“it’s not too late!”).

Guiding Principles of FAFSA Communications



Be
Transparent

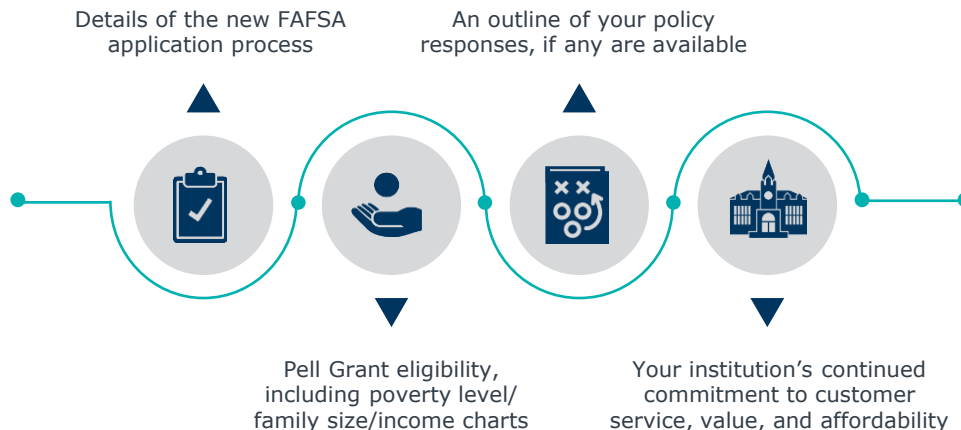
Reduce
Jargon

Be
Flexible

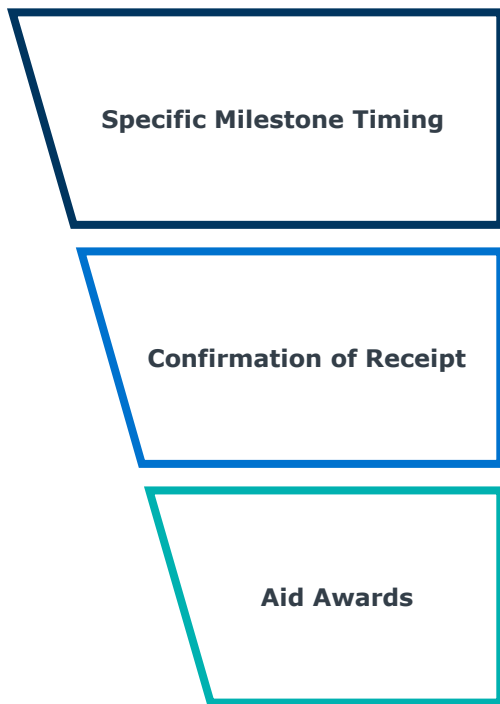
Differentiate
by Audience

Be
Positive

Key Messages to Communicate to Students and Their Families



Prioritize Timely Outreach Once Data Is Available



The sooner you can communicate actual timing of process steps with students, the better.

Immediately upon loading the FAFSA, schools should be communicating to students that they have received their FAFSA.

Finally, schools should be communicating when students can expect to get their aid award.

A Final Communications Note



Three Questions Enrollment Leaders Can't Overlook



What are you communicating **before you have your aid awards?**



What are you communicating to **continuing students?**



What are you communicating if you don't have your awards out **but your competition does?**

Five Takeaways from This Session

1

Come equipped with answers

Changing financial aid processes will likely confuse some families; be ready to address their questions

2

Timing a stumbling block

The later FAFSA cycle this year will continue to throw off communications in unexpected ways

3

Time-shifting your benchmarks

The later cycle will also throw off your year-over-year comparisons during the admit cycle

4

Increased pressure on students

Student decision-making will be squeezed into a much shorter timeline

5

Don't needlessly complicate communications

Tailoring your messages to particular audiences will help avoid over-explanation and minimize confusion