Dear student

*Important changes are coming to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in 2016, and we want to be sure you fully understand the updates.* We encourage you to share this information with family and friends who are planning to apply for Federal Student Aid.

**FAFSA UPDATES TAKE EFFECT OCT. 1, 2016**

Starting this Fall, students can submit a FAFSA application as of Oct. 1, 2016—three months earlier than ever before. This Fall, students—all students, new and returning—can use prior-prior year (PPY) tax information when reporting personal and family income.

**What does that mean for you?** When completing the 17-18 FAFSA you will use your 2015 taxes. Because you will be using 2015 income information, there is a greater chance that you can use the [IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT).](http://www.finaid.org/fafsa/irsdataretrievaltool.phtml) The DRT allows you to transfer your official IRS tax information into the FAFSA, reducing errors and speeding up completion time.

**FILING EARLY IS KEY**

We cannot stress enough the importance of filing your FAFSA using 2015 tax information as early as you are able. Roughly $150 billion in aid is awarded annually to college students by the Federal government in the form of need-based grants, loans, and work-study funds. If you file your application late, you may risk missing out on certain funds.

**UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENTS**

Income-wise, are you currently making a lot less or more than you did in 2015? If there are significant differences between your current income and the income reported on your 2015 taxes, we encourage you to reach out to the Financial Aid Office. The office can help review your income changes and determine if professional judgment can be used to ensure the financial information on your FAFSA accurately reflects your current financial situation. Keep in mind, you will still need to complete the FAFSA with the appropriate 2015 data. The aid office will guide you through any necessary steps if professional judgment is required.

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**POSITIVE CHANGES**

The FAFSA changes bring advantages for students and parents, who previously may have felt rushed to complete their taxes and to make decisions on which school to attend. These changes mean you can:

* Apply earlier for financial aid via the FAFSA, available Oct. 1, 2016
* Potentially qualify for additional aid due to earlier application
* Have additional time to resolve any income verification requirements or supplemental requests
* Make a more informed decision about which school is the right match for you
* Take your time completing your current year’s taxes prior to applying for FAFSA

**HERE TO SUPPORT YOU**

Please reach out to the Financial Aid Office via [phone] or [email] with questions or concerns you may have regarding the upcoming PPY changes. We appreciate that financial aid and the college admissions process can be an emotional time, and we want to make the path as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

Sincerely,

[FinAid Office information

Mailing Address

Website

Social Feeds]