

Not Your Parents' FAFSA

Change expected to benefit students, families

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Anyone who has ever applied for financial aid knows those five little letters — FAFSA — and the date it becomes available very well. Effective for the 2017-2018 academic year, however, the FAFSA, or *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*, [is about to change](#), becoming available for filing beginning Oct. 1, 2016, instead of Jan. 1, 2017.

Suzy Allen, UNH's director of financial aid, explains the use of "prior prior year" (PPY) tax information should simplify the process for those applying for financial aid.

Discussions about this change have been ongoing for several years, and the modification is "supported by many aid professionals as well as [our national association](#)," Allen notes.

Indeed, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators calls the change "a victory for students and college-access advocates."

"The use of PPY information will allow most families to easily populate the FAFSA with actual income tax data by using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool," Allen explains. While that

option does exist with the current FAFSA deadlines, there are often delays since families cannot use the tool until their taxes have been filed and processed by the IRS.

With PPY, Allen says, “those timing issues go away.” and the opportunity to file the FAFSA in the fall “will also give families earlier information about what their Estimated Family Contribution will be, which means a longer time to plan and evaluate options.”

Financial Aid Deadlines

For UNH's Durham campus, the financial aid deadline for the upcoming 2016-2017 academic year, with the current FAFSA forms, is March 1.

The new FAFSA and deadlines will go into effect for the 2017-2018 academic year.

It is too soon to tell whether the ability for earlier FAFSA submission will have an impact on UNH's financial aid deadlines.

“As more information becomes available, I will put together a committee to determine an overall plan for the university,” Allen explains, noting such impacts would go beyond the financial aid office. “We will need to consider our current admissions processing timeframe, when we determine costs, how we will communicate with our continuing student population and modifications to our systems, among other things.”

The first year is sure to mean some challenges.

“There are currently lots of unanswered questions,” Allen says, but she notes that the upside is financial aid officers are not strangers to challenges and changes. “We’ll get through this one as we have others; a major difference with this change is that we know that it is ultimately for the benefit of our students and families, so that makes it easier for us to manage the challenge.”

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