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White House Dramatically Improves Student Aid Application Process Changes will make FAFSA easier for students to file and for colleges to process

“We’re thrilled that the Administration will announce tomorrow that it is taking a crucial step to dramatically simplify and improve the financial aid process for millions of students and families. Basing federal aid eligibility on the tax data available when students typically apply to college, sometimes called ‘prior-prior year’ data, fixes a major timing problem.

“This important change means students will be able to apply for aid earlier and more easily, and make better informed decisions about where to apply and how to pay for college. TICAS has been [calling for](#) this *much-needed timing fix* since [2007](#), and the change has garnered support from both Republicans and Democrats in Congress as well as from [dozens of organizations](#) concerned with college access and completion.

“Starting next year, millions more students and parents will be able to transfer their tax data directly into the online Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA), eliminating the need to transcribe or estimate answers to up to 20 high-stakes questions. Since the tax information is from the IRS, it will not need verification, which reduces paperwork burdens for students and costs for colleges. This also means students can apply for aid when or even before they apply to college, instead of having to wait weeks or months until both the FAFSA and the required tax information become available.

“Because most types of aid require a FAFSA, this change will make it easier for students to meet the many college and state grant deadlines that fall well before taxes are due in April. And for the up to two million low-income students who miss out on federal Pell Grants because they don’t complete a FAFSA, this simpler, better timed process could help them get the aid they need to succeed.”

Note: See p. 30 of our [white paper](#) for a one-page table listing how this timing fix helps students, families, and schools.

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An independent, nonprofit organization, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) works to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. Our Project on Student Debt works to increase public understanding of rising student debt and the implications for our families, economy, and society. For more information see www.ticas.org or follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/TICAS_org.