

PRIOR-PRIOR YEAR: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

PPY Primer

What exactly is PPY? PPY stands for prior-prior year, and references the tax information students use to fill out the FAFSA. Currently, the form requires tax data from the previous year. Starting in October 2016, students will complete the FAFSA using tax information from two years prior to their anticipated college entrance date. For example, a high school senior planning to enroll in college in fall 2017 would file the FAFSA using tax data from 2015.

What other changes are ahead for the FAFSA? Students will be able to file for aid beginning Oct. 1—a full three months earlier than previously allowed.

Which students will be affected?

The Class of 2017 will be the first high school cohort to file the FAFSA on the new timeline using PPY tax data. All returning college students will also submit their applications following the new procedure.

Why were the changes made?

The new procedure will better align the admission and financial aid processes, giving students and families an earlier and more accurate idea of their anticipated financial aid and college costs. It is estimated the streamlined procedure will encourage hundreds of thousands of additional students to apply for aid, and in turn, increase the number of first-generation, low-income students who pursue a college degree.

Admission and financial aid professionals have a critical role to play as colleges across the country develop new policies and procedures in anticipation of changes to the FAFSA.

Starting next fall, students and families will be asked to report income information using prior-prior year tax data. Due to this shift, the FAFSA will become available on Oct. 1—three months earlier than in previous years.

As you work to develop a seamless process for students applying for admission and financial aid, keep these considerations in mind:

2016, you'll likely field more questions from counselors, parents, and students about your institution's financial aid practices. Admission officers who recruit students directly should be prepared to answer basic questions about earlier FAFSA completion and the timing of admission and financial aid award letters.

Collaboration will be more critical than ever. Admission officers should initiate or participate in campus-wide conversations to discuss the practical effects of the new FAFSA process. Senior admission officers may have to consider if administrative changes are needed to accommodate what will likely be earlier delivery of Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) to postsecondary institutions by the federal government. Reach out to software vendors to ensure your institution is prepared to process requests within the new timeline.

Key admission deadlines shouldn't change. The college application and admission calendar should not change radically. Colleges may not set application deadlines prior to Oct. 15, nor can they require students to make an enrollment decision prior to May 1 of their senior year (with the exception of Early Decision and Restrictive Early Action).

But dates could shift. Some schools may choose to change their deadlines for awarding institutional aid. Financial aid professionals expect hundreds of colleges and universities to use the new FAFSA procedure to provide financial aid packages earlier than in previous years, potentially to align with offers of admission.

More time may be needed for professional judgments. With the use of PPY tax data, there's a greater likelihood that a family's stated income will no longer reflect their current economic status. Starting in fall 2016, your institution's financial aid office may be asked by more students to adjust award packages.

A lot of moving parts remain. Financial aid packages aren't created in a bubble. Despite having earlier access to students' financial data, universities may need to estimate awards if state grant totals aren't approved by the legislatures in a timely fashion. Additionally, many colleges don't finalize tuition for the coming academic year until the spring, a critical piece of information when estimating cost of attendance. Let students and counselors know how state and institutional procedures will affect your ability to confirm award amounts.



National Association for
College Admission Counseling

NACAC is committed to supporting a successful transition to the 2017–18 FAFSA. This fact sheet is part of a series of materials about the 2017–18 FAFSA and prior-prior year guidelines. For more information, visit www.nacacnet.org/ppy.

NACAC is an organization of professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education.

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