



**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

MEMORANDUM

TO: High School Counselors
Students
Parents

FROM: Ellen E. Weaver, State Superintendent
South Carolina Department of Education

Dr. Greg Little, Acting President and Executive Director
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

DATE: May 14, 2024

RE: Addressing Challenges with the New Free Application for Federal Student Aid
(FAFSA) Rollout for the 2024-25 Academic Year

Dear Students, Parents, and Educational Professionals

We are writing jointly on behalf of the South Carolina Department of Education and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education to acknowledge the challenges you all have faced following the comprehensive overhaul and delayed rollout of the new FAFSA for the 2024-25 academic year.

Impact and Concerns:

We are deeply aware of the stress and confusion the new FAFSA process has caused, particularly for families relying on financial aid to access college education. Despite the potential long-term benefits touted by the U.S. Department of Education, including the possibility of over 9,100 new students from low-income backgrounds in South Carolina receiving federal Pell Grants, we have been alarmed by deficiencies in the near-term implementation process. Unfortunately, data shows a significant decline in FAFSA submissions across South Carolina, with districts like Aiken, Orangeburg, and McCormick experiencing drops of up to 45%. These changes come at a critical moment in the college planning timeline, adding undue burdens to our students and educators.

ELLEN E. WEAVER · STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION
RUTLEDGE BUILDING · 1429 SENATE STREET · COLUMBIA, SC 29201
PHONE: 803-734-8500 · FAX: 803-734-3389 · ED.SC.GOV

Encouragement to Proceed:

Despite these obstacles, continuing the FAFSA submission process is crucial. Adhering to submission deadlines is vital to ensure eligibility for federal Pell Grants. To aid in this process, we have developed several tools and resources:

1. [New FAFSA Toolkit](#): This comprehensive guide provides step-by-step assistance in navigating the new FAFSA requirements, available on the CHE website.
2. **College Goal SC Campaign**: We have expanded this initiative to include 46 schools, offering hands-on help to complete your FAFSA applications.

Call to Action:

We urge every student and family to:

- Access the [New FAFSA Toolkit](#) online as soon as possible.
- Participate in the College Goal SC events when available in your area.
- Reach out to your school counselors for personalized advice and support.
- Double-check to ensure FAFSA verification/completion status.

Our Commitment:

Be assured, our commitment to your educational success is unwavering. We wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude for the patience of everyone this has impacted: students, parents, and our high school counselors. Thank you for your perseverance, cooperation, and dedication during this time. Together, we are striving towards a brighter future in higher education for all in South Carolina.