



# THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS

October 2023

Volume 31 Issue 2

## How the FAFSA delay could impact colleges and students

Highereddiver.com

The U.S. Department of Education is overhauling the Free Application for Federal Student Aid this year, but the agency plans to **roll out the new form in December** — two months later than usual. That delay could cause issues for college administrators and states, financial aid experts say.

The new FAFSA represents the first major redesign of the form in over 40 years. The revamp intends to create a more streamlined process for students applying for federal financial aid, expands Pell Grant eligibility and lower barriers for certain student populations, including those who are homeless, incarcerated and come from low-income backgrounds.

But the delay could affect state and institutional financial aid deadlines, require colleges to increase staffing, and impact students' college decisions. Several aspects of the FAFSA simplification will also add burdens for financial aid officers, such as new reporting requirements and changes to the federal aid methodology formula,

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## 5 ways to look uncommon on the common app

Parentingforcollege.com

The Common Application is used by over 500 colleges. It was created to save colleges and students time when submitting their college applications, hence called the Common App. The basic information you complete in the application will be used by every college you apply to: test scores, personal information, and extracurricular activity lists. You don't have to resubmit that information to each individual college.

The Common App was set up in 1975 to simplify the application process, but the very name of the application suggests that there is no opportunity for students to stand out in this common app process. But there are opportunities for students to stand out, or look uncommon when using the Common App.

**Craft a stellar essay** - Your personal statement is your one opportunity for the admissions officer to "meet you", to visualize the person behind the numbers. While no essay can save an unqualified application, an outstanding essay can push an otherwise mediocre application into the "yes" pile.

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## Breaking Down the 4 Tiers of Extracurricular Activities

Collegevine.com

Students preparing to apply for college love grades and standardized test scores. After all, they're black and white with no gray area, which makes them easy to compare against the admission standards of potential schools. While grades and test scores are important considerations for colleges when deciding which students to admit, they're just part of what many admissions officers are looking for. Extracurricular activities are a key criteria colleges review when deciding who to accept and can account for as much as 25% of an admissions decision.

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## SCHOLARSHIPS

### QUESTBRIDGE SCHOLARSHIP

The National College Match is a college admission and scholarship process through which high-achieving, low-income students can be admitted early with full four-year scholarships



### URBAN OUTFITTERS & FUJIFILM SCHOLARSHIP

53 people will win prizes including up to \$20,000 in Scholarships. Applicants should submit two essays about their passion and inspiration guiding their college experience. Deadline to apply is October 16, 2023.



### ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION MOST VALUABLE STUDENT AWARD

Applicant must be a high school senior who is a citizen of the United States. Selection is based upon scholarship, leadership, and financial need. \$15,000 scholarship. Applicants do not need to be related to a member of the Elks. Applications opens August 1st



### DUSTIN BIEGLER SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship seeks to honor the life of Dustan Biegler by supporting high school seniors and adult learners pursuing a business degree or advanced training in the Construction or Skilled Trades fields. Apply by November 1st



### VOICE OF DEMOCRACY COMPETITION

The National Audio Essay Scholarship open to high school students grades 9th - 12th. Each state winner is provided with a five day all-expenses paid trip to Washington D.C., plus the opportunity to compete for National Scholarships totaling more than \$130,000. Deadline: October 31, 2023



### YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Our program is one of the nation's only national scholarship programs specifically serving youth that have experienced homelessness. Deadline to apply November 24th

### HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION

Manages 70 of the largest need based scholarship opportunities in the country for high school juniors who have faced or overcome obstacles. Scholarships by state and by career.



## ✓ SENIOR CHECKLIST

- Attend virtual college meetings
- Keep your grades up.
- [Register for the SAT or ACT](#)
- FAFSA opens December 2023
- Start working on your common app essay
- Research scholarships.
- Early Decision Deadline is November 1st
- Register for the [Common Application](#)

## FUN FACT:

Stanford rejects 60% of students with perfect SAT scores, but they reject 96% of all applicants.

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said Justin Draeger, president and CEO of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. “Financial aid offices are certainly feeling the pressure,” Draeger said. “These are the most significant changes to the way students and families apply for and receive financial aid in decades, and they’re happening on a tight timeline.”

Indeed, only 28% of financial aid professionals believed their institution was mostly or completely prepared for the FAFSA simplification rollout, according to a February NASFAA survey.

The delay will force financial aid officers to complete their work in a compressed time frame, said Frank Ballmann, director of federal relations for the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.

“In effect, they’re going to be working twice as hard, twice as long as they normally would,” said Ballmann. “That’s going to be a huge challenge for them.”

Some recommend that states with financial aid deadlines from January to early March — including Texas, California and Maryland — should move those dates back to give students more time to fill out their FAFSAs. Students unable to secure financial aid awards until the spring may not be able to make early decision deadlines, said Ballmann. That could dissuade students from attending college next year.

The challenge, Ballmann said, will be recapturing students that fall through the cracks or take a gap year. “If there’s a problem this winter with high school seniors not applying, I think we’ll have a lot of states focus very hard on reaching out to them for the next cycle,” said Ballmann.

The delay could also affect which colleges that students attend if it holds up their applications or if they miss deadlines for scholarship programs.

“That may shift them to a less expensive institution or may drive them to enroll at a local community college instead of a four year college,” Katharine Meyer, a fellow at The Brookings Institution’s Brown Center on Education Policy said.



## **What is the CSS profile?**

CSS Profile®, a common application for institutional financial aid, will be ready and available to families applying for aid during the 2024-25 academic year on October 1, 2023. CSS Profile will help institutions deliver equitable financial aid decisions by providing critical data beyond what the FAFSA furnishes. With a few key pieces of additional data, colleges can make more informed decisions about a family’s ability to pay for the cost of education.

As in prior years, CSS Profile will continue to provide an estimated Federal Methodology calculation in addition to CSS Profile’s own Institutional Methodology calculation. The 2024-25 application will be updated to calculate an estimated Student Aid Index (SAI) based on the best information available from FSA rather than an estimated

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COLLEGE NEWS

**BYU-Idaho and Ensign College** will launch truncated 3 year bachelor's degree programs next spring after getting the go-ahead from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

**The University of Utah** has launched an investigation of its highly acclaimed women's gymnastics program following allegations of verbal and emotional abuse of team gymnasts by head coach Tom Farden.

An Oregon jury awarded nearly \$4 million to a former **Pacific University** student who accused the institution of mishandling allegations of sexual assault against him, The Oregonian reported.

Under pressure from lawmakers to admit more in-state students, the **University of California, Santa Cruz**, accepted 50,381 total applicants in 2022, up from just over 38,000 last year. Of those, roughly 23,000 are in-state freshmen and 6,600 are transfers from within California.

Students for Fair Admissions, the group that spearheaded the Supreme Court cases against **Harvard University and the University of North Carolina**, filed a lawsuit challenging the race-conscious admissions policies of the **U.S. Military Academy at West Point**.

 **JUNIOR CHECKLIST**

- **ACT - Next test date is December 9th. You must register by November 3rd. It takes 30 minutes to complete registration and you will need a photo.**
- **SAT - Next test date is November 4th. You must register by October 5th.**
- **Attend College Fairs**
- **Meet with admission reps**
- **Tour college campuses**

The **University of San Diego** is disciplining approximately half its football team due to a hazing incident that occurred earlier this month.

A bill is being introduced in California that would launch a pilot program at **UCLA** to create a common admissions guarantee for community college students to get into a UC or California State University campus.

**SCHOLARSHIP FOR DREAMERS**

\$4,500 per year for four years for undocumented students with goals to attend college.

**APPLY HERE**

If you are interested in attending an **HBCU**, **apply in the Common Black College App**. Pay a one time fee of \$20 to apply to 65 HBCUs.

**University of Rochester Alan and Jane Handler Scholarship**

Nominations are now open.

Deadline November 30th

**APPLY HERE**

**APPLY HERE**

**APPLY HERE**

**HSF SCHOLARSHIPS**

More than 150 scholarships for Latino students with or without US citizenship.

**DEFINING DISABILITY SCHOLARSHIP**

\$1,000 scholarship available to students who meet the scholarship eligibility requirements below and who best describe in a 750-1,000 word essay what discusses how to define disability in the modern world versus its medical definition?

Apply by Oct. 31st

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- **Write an unforgettable supplemental essay** - Supplemental essays for college applications can take all kinds of forms, but the majority of them are actually asking a very similar question: "Why do you want to go to our college?" The question sounds simple, but college admissions officers are looking for those essays that are unforgettable, or create a lasting impression. Answer the question by providing specific details that made you choose them above others.
- **Pick an interest and stick with it** - You can create a lasting impression with a college if you exhibit consistency and commitment to an area that interests you. Colleges look at the extracurricular activities listed on the Common App and use them to get a better picture of how you spend your time outside of school.
- **Get glowing recommendations** - Pick the people who provide recommendations carefully. Do they know you well enough to tell a college why you should receive an offer of admission? Or are they simply a casual acquaintance who will list the basics: good student, good work ethic, and popular with classmates? These letters are important and they give you another opportunity to stand out on the Common App.
- **Submit early** - at least two weeks before the application deadline. Instead of arriving with all the applicants who squeaked in at the last minute, your application will be on "the top of the pile" and the admissions officer will have more time to review it.

### Example of a Weak Supplemental Essay

*I believe the Trinity College of Arts and Sciences at Duke is an excellent match for me. I believe college should not be merely a gateway to the work force; it should educate the student in a variety of subjects and prepare him or her for the range of challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in life. I have always been a curious person and enjoy reading all kinds of literature and nonfiction. In high school I excelled in history, English, AP psychology, and other liberal arts subjects. I have not yet decided on a major, but when I do, it will almost certainly be in the liberal arts. I know that Trinity College is very strong in these areas. But regardless of my major, I want to receive a broad education that spans a variety of areas in the liberal arts, so that I will graduate as not only a viable job prospect, but also as a well-rounded and learned adult who can make diverse and valuable contributions to my community. I believe Duke's Trinity College will help me grow and become that kind of person.*

### What should you avoid when writing a supplemental essay for college admission?

The sample presented here illustrates many of the common mistakes made by applicants. Duke University's Trinity College offers applicants the opportunity to write a supplemental essay that answers the question: "Please discuss why you consider Duke a good match for you. Is there something in particular at Duke that attracts you? Please limit your response to one or two paragraphs."

The question is typical of many supplemental essays. Essentially, the admissions folks want to know why their school is of particular interest to you. Such questions often generate remarkably bland essays that make common supplemental essay mistakes. The example is one example of what not to do.

A good response, then, must discuss specific aspects of Duke that appeal to the applicant. Unlike a strong supplemental essay, the sample essay above fails to do so.

The student wants to be "well-rounded" and to "grow." These are all worthwhile goals, but they don't say anything that is unique to Duke. Any comprehensive university offers a variety of subjects and helps students to grow.

## KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FAFSA AND CSS PROFILE REQUIREMENTS

FAFSA and CSS Profile both require:

### Student Info

- Income tax return data
- Educational savings accounts
- Bank accounts

### Parent Info

- Bank accounts
- Income, taxes, and exemptions (but CSS requires multiple years)
- Investment real estate
- Liquid investments (e.g., stocks, mutual funds)
- Family business / farm info (for FAFSA, only if >100 employees)
- Tax-deferred retirement contributions (e.g. 401k, IRA)

CSS Profile additionally requires\*:

- Trust funds
- Equity in family home
- Total retirement savings
- Non-retirement annuities
- Medical spending accounts
- Siblings' assets held in parent's name
- Siblings k-12 private school tuition
- Other miscellaneous valuables (e.g., collectibles)

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federal EFC. Estimated Federal Methodology calculations will be updated as additional information and guidance from FSA are released.

Gail Holt, dean of financial aid at Amherst College, shares one example of how CSS Profile data will continue to help her institution's access mission in the upcoming application cycle, "Our institution relies on receiving family financial data in a timely fashion to be able to share financial aid offers at the time a student is admitted. Applicants receiving those decisions in December deserve to have these details. This data may not be available from the FAFSA until late 2023 for the 2024-25 academic year but will be estimated in CSS Profile calculations. This additional information, including special circumstances and medical expenses families may share, is crucial in assessing affordability."

## 9 Common CSS Profile Mistakes and How To Avoid Them

[ncan.org](https://ncan.org)

Students and families commonly make several mistakes on this form that can cause a delay in their application being processed and negatively impact a student's ability to fund their college education.

As your students are filling out college applications, you may work with some who need help completing their CSS Profile application. Here are nine common CSS Profile mistakes and how to help your students avoid them.

- Applying for the wrong academic year
- Entering names or Social Security numbers incorrectly
- Entering the student's date of birth incorrectly
- Answering questions about the student's status incorrectly
- Reporting parents' information on student questions and vice versa
- Not properly reporting the student's parents
- Selecting a graduate school instead of an undergraduate college and/or university
- Not utilizing the Special Circumstances section to tell a financial aid office about a family's story
- When parents are divorced or separated, both parents reporting that the student lives with them, or neither reporting that the student lives with them.

While grades are black and white, extracurricular activities give a student depth and demonstrate a more personal picture to admissions officials. Colleges are not simply searching for academically excellent students; rather, they're looking for well-rounded students who will get involved in and engage with their campus communities. Even at the most academically selective schools, a strong extracurricular profile can help a student stand out from a pile of academically excellent applicants.

Extracurricular activities allow colleges and universities to get a better understanding of a student outside of the classroom. Extracurricular activities offer students a chance to share with a college what they're passionate about. They also demonstrate readiness for college, as a student with a robust extracurricular profile along with strong grades and test scores has proven an ability to juggle multiple activities and commitments.

### **What Are Extracurricular Activities?**

You may be wondering what exactly qualifies as an extracurricular activity. Does working a summer job count? How about taking care of your sibling?

As a general rule, anything you do routinely outside of the classroom, and not for academic credit, counts as an extracurricular. The activities should also be valuable to you, and have significant impact on your development.

For example, watching Netflix wouldn't count, but running your own movie critique blog would. Casually playing Minecraft wouldn't count, but programming your own Minecraft plugins with 1,000+ downloads each would. In both examples, the situations that wouldn't count were simply activities for leisure. The examples that were actually extracurriculars likely contributed to the student's growth and helped them develop real-world skills.

In a similar vein, extracurriculars should also be something that you devote significant time to. Volunteering once to fulfill a requirement shouldn't be something you list on your application, but volunteering weekly for a year could definitely fill the bill.

So, basically any organized club, sport, or other activity can be classified as an extracurricular, as long as you've shown dedication, and the activity has helped you grow. Personal projects like running a half marathon, or building an app would also fit this criteria. This means that working a job, and taking care of a sibling would also count.

## **Extracurricular Activity Progression**

- **Freshman Year:** Freshman year is a student's opportunity to join multiple clubs across different fields of interest, both in and out of the school environment. Students with an interest in music and athletics should try out for the band or sports teams. If there is a cause a student is passionate about, they should seek out volunteer opportunities related to it.
- **Sophomore Year:** During sophomore year, students should begin narrowing the focus of their extracurricular activities, focusing their time on the activities most meaningful to them. If there is something a student is extremely passionate about but has no outlet for, they should start a group or organization to support that interest. Students should also consider potential future leadership opportunities in the extracurricular activities that they're involved in. Much like colleges want to admit well-rounded students, they want to admit leaders.
- **Junior Year:** Because colleges and universities value leadership, students in their junior year should seek out as many leadership positions as possible. Students in leadership positions should work to expand the clubs and organizations under their guidance to show colleges the positive and lasting impact they made.
- **Senior Year:** Students in their senior year should take advantage of any available leadership positions within clubs and organizations. Students already involved in clubs and organizations or in leadership positions should maintain their involvement.