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Financial aid applications for prospective and current college students to be available

Sacramento, Calif., December 31, 2023 – The Federal Student Aid Office has begun a soft launch of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA will open periodically during this soft launch period and students and families are encouraged to check for [updates on when the form is available \(linked here\)](#). Additionally, the California Student Aid Commission has simultaneously launched the opening of the California Dream Act Application (CADAA), and students can begin applying for financial aid for the 2024-25 academic year.

Both financial aid forms were delayed from their typical October availability due to major changes made in each application. The Federal Student Aid Office (FSA) of the U.S. Department of Education has worked to streamline the FAFSA by integrating tax data so most families will have prepopulated data on the form, making for a quicker and more efficient process. The new FAFSA also replaces the “Expected Family Contribution” (EFC), which often created confusion for students and families, with the “Student Aid Index” (SAI) and an updated formula determining financial aid eligibility. This updated formula will result in more students being eligible for a Pell Grant and increased eligibility for the maximum Pell Grant, ensuring more students receive more aid.

With FAFSA changes set into motion by legislation signed in 2020, the Commission also took an opportunity to look into how to streamline the California Dream Act Application available for undocumented students and others that do not apply for federal financial aid. Based on feedback from students and stakeholders, the Commission redesigned the CADAA to simplify key steps, use more accessible language and question prompts, as well as implement recent legislation (AB 1540 by Asm. Mike Fong) to embed an affidavit that CADAA filers must complete to demonstrate their eligibility for state financial aid. Previously, undocumented students had to fill out this affidavit form separately from the CADAA to both access state financial aid and an exemption from non-resident tuition rates. These

enhancements to the CADAA will mean that students who cannot submit a FAFSA will still benefit from a more user-friendly and streamlined financial aid process.

Due to the delayed launch of the financial aid applications, the Cal Grant priority deadline for students pursuing a 4-year institution has been extended to April 2, 2024. Students should also check with their college as there may be other deadlines to be considered for campus-based aid.

For more information on the Better FAFSA or Better CADAA, [click here](#).

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The [California Student Aid Commission](#) currently serves over 400,000 students and administers the state's \$3 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the Cal Grant, the Middle Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing a higher education. Visit our website at www.csac.ca.gov or follow us on social media by clicking on our [Link Tree](#).