

GEN-14-12

July 10, 2014

Subject: Announcement of "Designated Entities" Eligible to Receive FAFSA Filing Status Information Under the FAFSA Completion Initiative

Summary: This letter announces two sets of designated entities that may receive FAFSA Filing Status Information from State Grant Agencies under the new FAFSA Completion Initiative.

Dear Colleague:

With the assistance of many of the state grant agencies, we recently implemented the *FAFSA Completion Initiative* to help increase the number of students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for Federal, State, and other student financial aid. Under the *FAFSA Completion Initiative* state grant agencies are authorized to provide limited FAFSA information to high schools, school districts, and to certain "designated entities."

On March 14, 2014, we informed state grant agencies that a revised "Student Aid Internet Gateway Application for State Grant Agencies" (SAIG Application) was available for execution. The revised SAIG Application includes a provision allowing a state grant agency to disclose defined "FAFSA Filing Status Information"¹ to local educational agencies (LEAs), to secondary schools, and to other entities that have been designated by the Secretary. Obtaining this information will allow the LEA, secondary school, or designated entity to identify students who should be completing a FAFSA.

We have attached to this Dear Colleague Letter –

- The revised SAIG Application;
- The March 14, 2014, letter that was provided to all state grant agencies announcing the revised SAIG Application; and

¹ See the definition of "FAFSA Filing Status Information" in Section C (Definitions) in the SAIG Participation Agreement for State Grant Agencies, (Part 2 of the SAIG Application).

- The set of *Questions and Answers (Q&As)* that was provided to state grant agencies that explains the new *FAFSA Completion Initiative*.

As discussed in Q&A #8, under the SAIG Application a designated entity that can receive FAFSA Filing Status Information from a state grant agency “. . . is a public or nonprofit entity that the Department [of Education] has designated as eligible to receive FAFSA Filing Status Information.” To receive FAFSA Filing Status Information for a student, the designated entity must have an established relationship with the student. An established relationship exists between a student and a designated entity when the student is enrolled in, has registered with, or is receiving services from the designated entity to assist the student in the pursuit of postsecondary education.

As is the case for the release of FAFSA Filing Status Information to secondary schools and to LEAs, designated entities may receive FAFSA Filing Status Information from a state grant agency only if: (1) the state grant agency has submitted to the Department the completed SAIG Participation Agreement (Part Two of the SAIG Application); (2) the state grant agency has executed a written agreement with the designated entity as provided in Section G of the SAIG Participation Agreement; and (3) the designated entity has an established relationship with the student, as defined in Section C (Definitions) of the SAIG Participation Agreement and above.

FAFSA Filing Status Information provided to an LEA, secondary school, or designated entity may only be provided to authorized personnel of the LEA, secondary school, or designated entity and only for the authorized purpose, as provided in Section B (Purpose of the Agreement) of the SAIG Participation Agreement, of providing assistance to the student in completing the FAFSA. The definition of authorized personnel is provided in Section C (Definitions) of the SAIG Participation Agreement.

This letter informs state grant agencies, and others, that the Secretary has designated the following two categories of nonprofit entities as eligible to receive FAFSA Filing Status Information from state grant agencies under provisions of the revised SAIG Participation Agreement, and as discussed above.

1. Entities that are grantees of the U.S. Department of Education under –

- The Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services programs (the TRIO Programs) authorized by Chapter 1 of Subpart 2 of Part A of Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and
- The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) authorized under Chapter 2 of Subpart 2 of Part A of Title IV of the HEA.

Information about these Department of Education grantees can be obtained by contacting –

- For the TRIO Programs: Princess Uzzelle, Program Support Assistant (202-502-7737, Princess.Uzzelle@ed.gov), or Chaz Gipson, Education Program Specialist (202-502-7637, Chaz.Gipson@ed.gov); and
- For the GEAR UP Program: Nofertary Fofana, Grant Management Specialist (202-502-7533, Nofertary.Fofana@ed.gov).

2. American Indian and Alaskan Native Educational Entities that are -

- Tribal Education Agencies – A Tribal Education Agency is the agency, department, or instrumentality of a Federally-recognized or State-recognized Indian tribe that is primarily responsible for supporting the elementary and secondary education of tribal students.
- Indian Organizations – As defined in the Department’s regulations at 34 CFR 263.3. For additional information contact Joyce Silverthorne, Director Office of Indian Education, U.S. Department of Education (202-401-0767, Joyce.Silverthorne@ed.gov).

These agencies and organizations may receive FAFSA Filing Status information for students other than tribal students if, like the tribal student, the agency has an established relationship with the student, as discussed above.

As a reminder, before any entity (LEA, secondary school, or designated entity) may receive FAFSA Filing Status Information, it must have executed a written agreement with the state grant agency consistent with the SAIG Participation Agreement.

Questions about this announcement of "designated entities" for purposes of the *FAFSA Completion Initiative* should be directed to FAFSACompletion@ed.gov.

Questions about completing the SAIG Application should be submitted to SAIG Technical Support at 1-800-330-5947.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Runcie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being the most prominent.

James W. Runcie
Chief Operating Officer

Attachments: The Student Aid Internet Gateway Application for State Grant Agencies
(SAIG Application)

March 14, 2014, Letter to State Grant Agencies

Questions and Answers (Q&As)