November 2012

Dear Counselor or Mentor:

The office of Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education, would like to share some updates to assist you in working with students.

Publication Updates

As we mentioned in our 2011 letter, we have transitioned the *Counselors and Mentors Handbook* to be an online-only publication. The 2013–14 edition will be available at **www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov** in late November 2012.

Later this autumn, we will publish a new document, *Financial Aid for Graduate and Professional Degree Students.* Written for current and potential graduate and professional degree students, it provides an overview of the federal student aid they may receive, basic eligibility requirements, how to apply, where to find nonfederal aid, and key items to consider before taking out a student loan.

Ordering Publications

Page 4 of this letter lists our core publications; you can order them and many more at **www.FSAPubs.gov**. To learn how to use **www.FSAPubs.gov** to order free publications, visit **www.fsa4counselors.ed.gov** and click on "Free Publications and Mailing List." Note: Please be sure to provide your e-mail address at the FSA Pubs site so we can communicate with you more effectively. You also can change your postal address or other contact information at that site.

FAFSA Enhancements

As a reminder: *FAFSA on the Web* at **www.fafsa.gov** allows applicants to access their IRS tax information and have it automatically inserted into the FAFSA[SM]. The 2013–14 FAFSA will include a brief series of questions to determine whether an individual is eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (IRS DRT). (Examples of someone who is ineligible would include someone who amended his or her tax return or filed separately from his or her spouse.) Only eligible applicants will be able to retrieve IRS data, saving time and confusion. The 2013–14 FAFSA will offer IRS DRT beginning February 3, 2013. Also for the 2013–14 cycle, *FAFSA on the Web* will encourage applicants to use electronic signatures, with the goal of expediting application processing and eliminating the need for users to take further action once they submit their FAFSA electronically.

Launch of StudentAid.gov and Social Media Sites

Federal Student Aid has launched some exciting new tools to help students through the financial aid process.

StudentAid.gov is a new website that provides straightforward and easy-to-understand information about planning and paying for college. The site combines content and interactive tools from several ED websites. As a mobile-optimized website, **StudentAid.gov** is fully accessible on tablets and smartphones.

On page 3 of this letter, we've provided a list of short URLs that will take your students directly to financial aid topics of interest online—mostly on **StudentAid.gov**.

StudentAid.gov offers more than just information in an easy-to-read format; it also features videos and infographics, scattered throughout the site, to help answer frequently asked questions about financial aid. (See page 4 of this letter for examples.) For your convenience, our full collection of videos can be found at **www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid**, while our full collection of infographics is at **www.visual.ly/users/FederalStudentAid**.

In addition to **StudentAid.gov**, Federal Student Aid also has launched a Twitter feed at **www.Twitter.com/FAFSA** and a Facebook page at **www.Facebook.com/FederalStudentAid** to offer alternative options to learn about the student aid process. Of particular note is our monthly interactive session called #AskFAFSA Office Hours, which takes place via our @FAFSA Twitter account. Keep an eye on our Twitter feed and/or the **www.ed.gov** blog for an announcement of the next Office Hours.

We hope our publications, websites, videos, infographics, and social media presence will help you raise your students' financial literacy and ease their path to college and all the way through loan repayment.

Thank you and have a successful FAFSA season.

Sincerely,

Brenda F. Wensil
Chief Customer Experience Officer
Federal Student Aid

Federal Student Aid: Find the Information You Need Online

	Topic	Resource
FAFSA	Fill out the FAFSA	www.fafsa.gov
	Basic FAFSA info: what is it and how do you fill it out	StudentAid.gov/fafsa StudentAid.gov/complete
	Dependency status for FAFSA purposes	StudentAid.gov/fafsa/filling-out/dependency
	How aid is calculated (including link to detailed EFC info)	StudentAid.gov/how-calculated
Types of Aid/ Getting Aid	Types of financial aid	StudentAid.gov/types
	Who can get federal student aid	StudentAid.gov/eligibility
	Pell Lifetime Eligibility Used	StudentAid.gov/pell-limit
	Finding and applying for scholarships	StudentAid.gov/scholarships
	Loan interest rates and fees	StudentAid.gov/interest
	Avoiding financial aid scams	StudentAid.gov/scams
Repaying Loans	Loan repayment	StudentAid.gov/repay
	Income-Based Repayment	StudentAid.gov/ibr
	Pay As You Earn	StudentAid.gov/PayAsYouEarn
	Public Service Loan Forgiveness	StudentAid.gov/publicservice
	Loan forgiveness in general	StudentAid.gov/forgiveness
	Loan forgiveness for teachers	StudentAid.gov/teach-forgive
College Prep	College Preparation Checklist: checklists for academic and financial preparation, for elementary school through adult students	StudentAid.gov/checklist
	Why go to college (education and pay/unemployment rates)	StudentAid.gov/whycollege
	Middle school preparation	StudentAid.gov/early
Special Audiences	Info for parents (tax benefits, support your child, college costs)	StudentAid.gov/parent
	Graduate school funding	StudentAid.gov/grad
	Financial aid for adult students	StudentAid.gov/resources#adult-students
	Aid for military families	StudentAid.gov/military
	Going to college in another country	StudentAid.gov/international
Social Media	@FAFSA Twitter feed	www.Twitter.com/FAFSA
	Federal Student Aid YouTube channel	www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid
	Federal Student Aid Facebook page	www.Facebook.com/FederalStudentAid

Major Federal Student Aid Resources for Students and Parents

Resource		Summary and URL Note: Most of these items are also available in Spanish, and several in Braille.	Audience(s)							
			Elementary School Student and Parent	Middle School Student and Parent	High School Student (9th-11th)	High School Senior	High School Parent	College Student	Borrower – Student or Parent	Adult Student
Core Publications*	College Prep Checklist	How to get ready academically and financially (StudentAid.gov/checklist)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Do You Need Money for College? Federal Student Aid at a Glance	Basic overview of aid and application process (StudentAid.gov/needmoney)			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Funding Your Education: The Guide to Federal Student Aid	Understanding the financial aid process and maximizing resources on our website (StudentAid.gov/funding)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Your Federal Student Loans	Federal loan and debt management info (StudentAid.gov/yourloans)			11th	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	FAFSA on the Web Worksheet	Preview of some of the FAFSA questions (StudentAid.gov/resources#worksheet)				✓	✓	✓		✓
	Paper FAFSA and PDF FAFSA	Free application for federal student aid (www.fafsa.gov)				✓	✓	✓		✓
Videos	• Overview of the Financial Aid Process • Types of Federal Student Aid • FAFSA Overview	Videos of one to two minutes in length, introducing viewers to the concepts of federal student aid; more videos coming soon—including videos on loan repayment (www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid and StudentAid.gov/resources)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Infographics	• Financial Aid Process • Eligibility for Federal Student Aid	Images explaining financial aid concepts in a visual way; more infographics coming soon (www.visual.ly/users/FederalStudentAid and StudentAid.gov/resources)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*View the full selection of publications you can order from Federal Student Aid at www.FSAPubs.gov. Students and parents may order at www.edpubs.gov.