



Advancing Global Higher Education

The 2017-2018 FAFSA – Impact on Practice

Results of the AACRAO July 2016 60-Second Survey



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Introduction

Beginning on Oct. 1, 2016, students will be able to fill out the Free Application for Federal Aid (FAFSA) for the 2017–2018 school year. In the past, students had to wait until January 1 to do so. In addition, applicants will no longer need to estimate income and tax information and will be able to retrieve their data directly from the IRS, right from the first day the FAFSA is available. The purpose of this survey was to gather a snapshot of if and/or how this change will impact admissions processes and calendars and to gain a sense of any concerns institutions have around this change (Appendix A).

Although there are some international institutions who participate in the Federal Student Loan programs¹, most institutions that participate in the various Federal Student Aid programs, including loans, are in the United States. As such, we opted to send this survey only to AACRAO member institutions in the United States; 480 institutions responded. All 50 states and the District of Columbia are represented in the data set as well as a variety of institutional types (Appendix B and C).

AACRAO is offering a free webinar, “Practical Implications for the 2017-2018 FAFSA on Admission and Enrollment Management Office,” on Thursday August 25, 2016 from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM ET. If you are interested in this webinar, click [here](#) to register.

Key Findings

- Most (91%) who responded were aware of the change, and most (94%) also view the change as “good for students”.
- Nearly seven out of ten (68%) indicate that the change will not impact the undergraduate admissions calendar.
- Almost all (94%) say that the change will not impact the graduate admissions calendar.
- For those who will make a change to their admissions calendar, most will move student outreach activities to an earlier date.

¹ <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools/types/international#participating-schools>



- Among those who had concerns regarding implementation, about three out of four were concerned about there being a lack of definitive Federal and/or State funding information available at the earlier date.
- Just slightly less than three out of four were concerned about their ability to package aid earlier and notify students earlier.

Results

The results for undergraduate and graduate practices are reported below by count of respondents and differentiated by institution type, control and size. Although the survey required all respondents to indicate whether or not this change will impact both undergraduate and graduate practices, the responses were filtered to exclude those institutions for whom the student population does not apply.

Undergraduate Admissions

Figure 1: Will Early FAFSA Change Impact the Undergraduate Admissions Calendar?

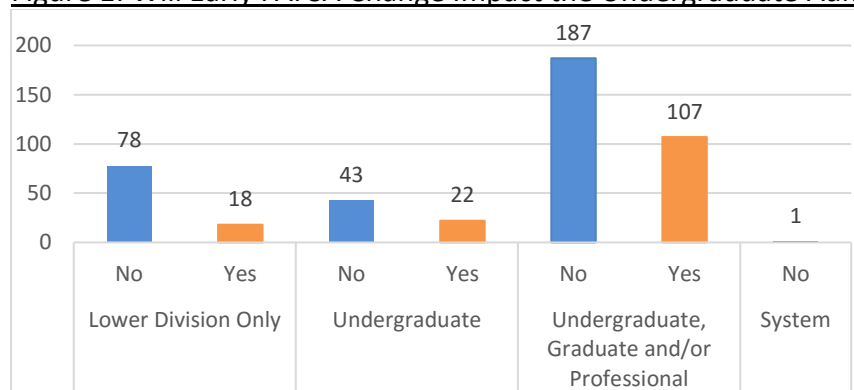


Figure 2: Changes to Undergraduate Admissions Calendar by Institution Type (all that apply)

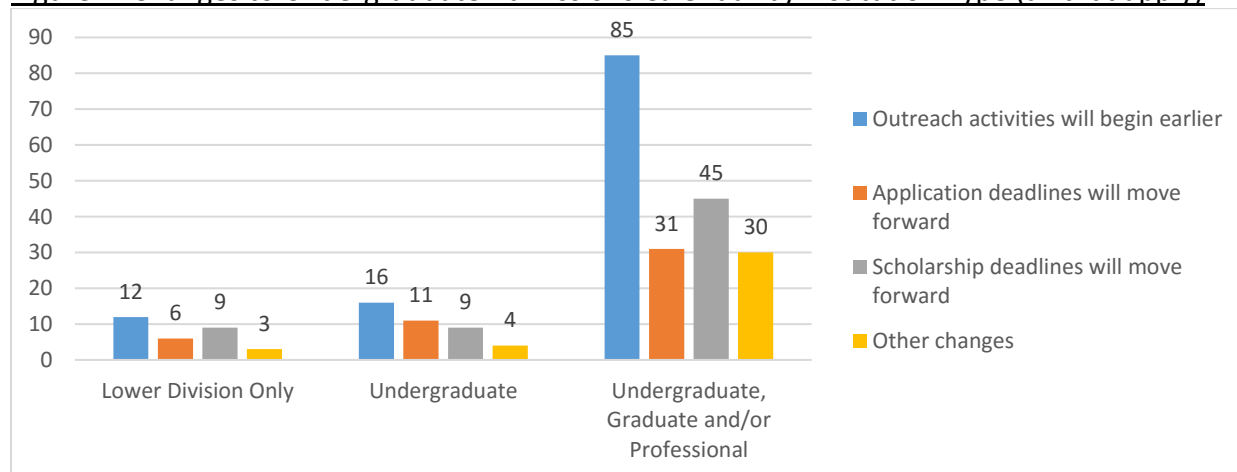


Figure 3: Changes to Undergraduate Admissions Calendar by Institution Control (all that apply)

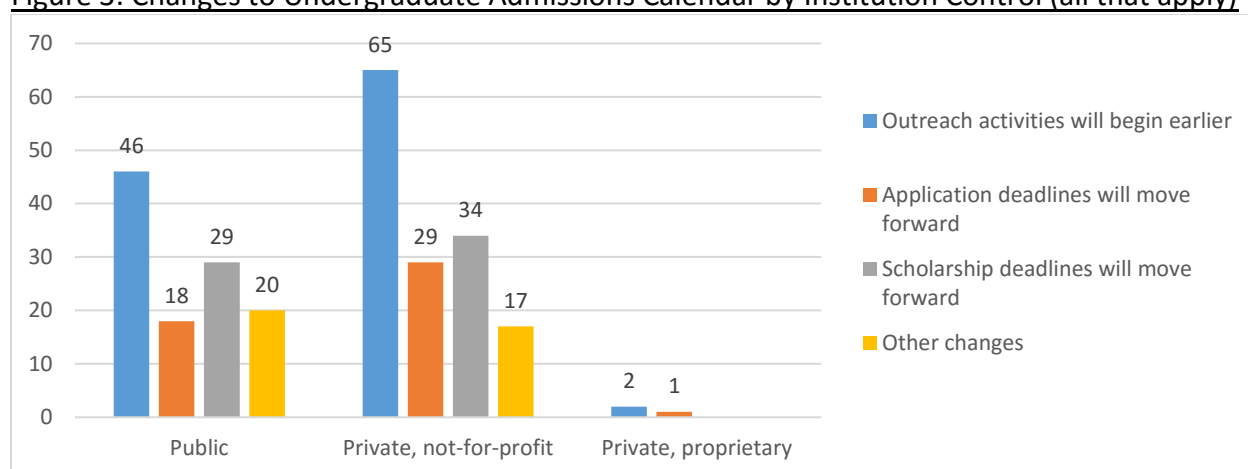


Figure 4: Changes to Undergraduate Admissions Calendar by Institution Size (all that apply)

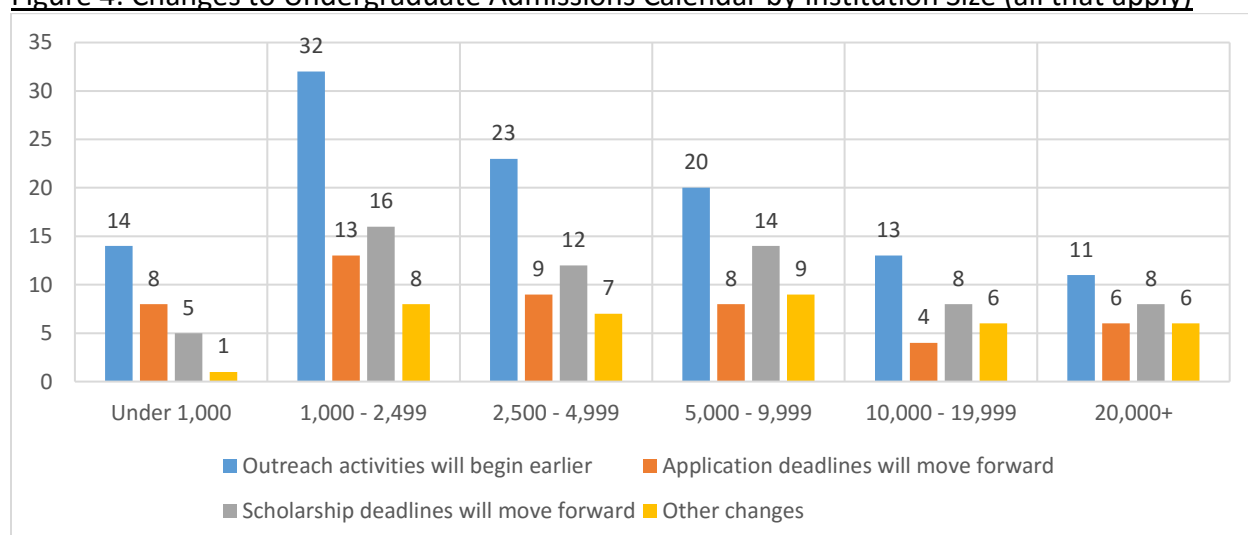


Table 1: Other Changes to Undergraduate Admissions Calendar*

*raw data

New programs might not be available for students to apply to because we might not have heard back from the state yet when the admission process is set up with the common app.
Deadline for primary consideration for need based aid will move from March 1 to December 1.
We plan to send scholarship and fin aid award letters earlier.
We will push for students to complete tasks earlier.
Announcement of acceptance has changed with this decision.
Anticipate that it will lengthen the cycle and timing of applications for admission and financial aid.
Will require earlier transcription of dual-enrollment work (HS/Col).



Application processing will begin sooner.
It really front loads the enrollment funnel.
Aid needs to be packaged earlier, which means the fiscal numbers for the next academic year need to be submitted earlier.
Will implement early action option.
We will be awarding sooner.
Changing school consideration from admission date to app completion date.
It will enable us to notify fall scholarship competitors sooner of their comprehensive award.
Ability for guidance officials to manage a new admission calendar while balancing other demands of their job.
Scholarship Days.
Financial aid awarding dates will be earlier.
Award letters will be sent earlier.
Application will be available August 1.
Students will be notified of admission earlier.
Financial Aid packages will be sent earlier.
Earlier notification of financial aid awards
Financial aid packages and tuition set way earlier than previous years.
We will award need-based aid earlier as a result.
Yield events will begin sooner and the number of events will increase due to having more time.
Financial Aid Deadlines will move forward.
CSS Profile deadline will move earlier.
Each item will need to be reviewed to determine if and what can be changed.
Event programming will be updated to earlier dates to explain the process sooner rather than later.
Earlier review of EOF applicants (special admission program in NJ for financially and educationally disadvantaged students.
Variety of timelines not necessarily connected to "deadlines".
have not had a FAFSA deadline or priority date; will have a FAFSA priority date next year
Many of our college fairs where we get the majority of our prospect names do not wrap up until the end of October.
Regular Decision and packages will be initiated much earlier than our traditional February 1st date.



Graduate Admissions

Figure 5: Will Early FAFSA Change Impact the Graduate Admissions Calendar?

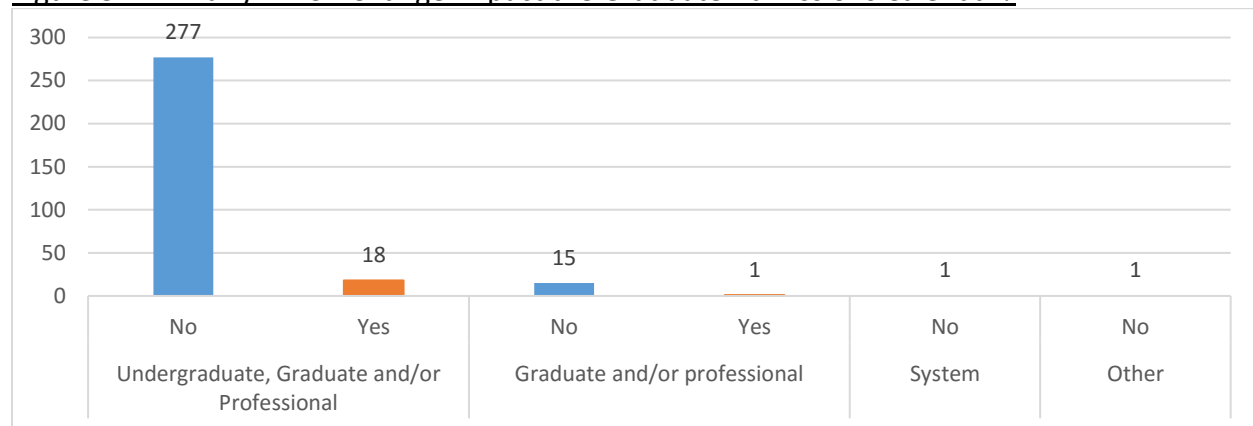


Figure 6: Changes to Graduate Admissions Calendar by Institution Type (all that apply)

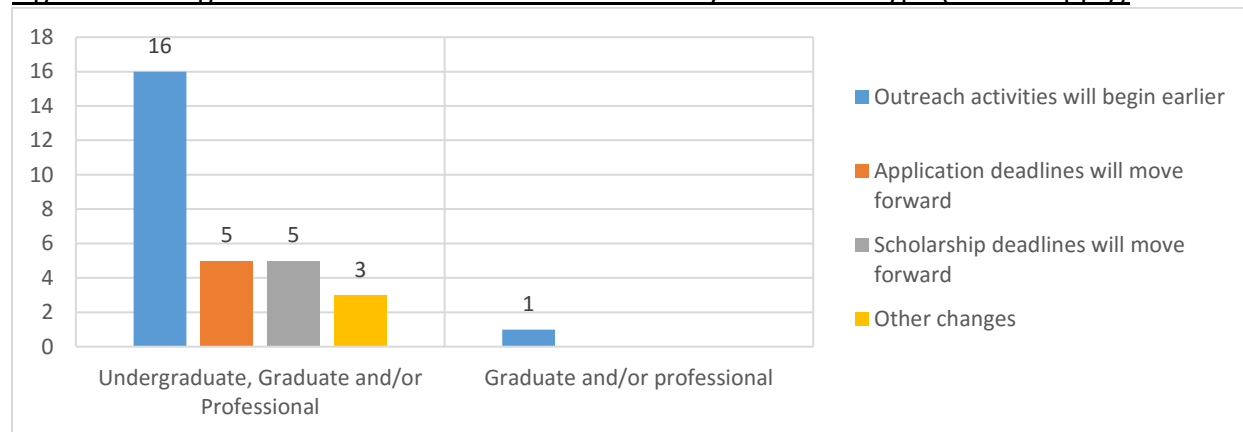


Figure 7: Changes to Graduate Admissions Calendar by Institution Control (all that apply)

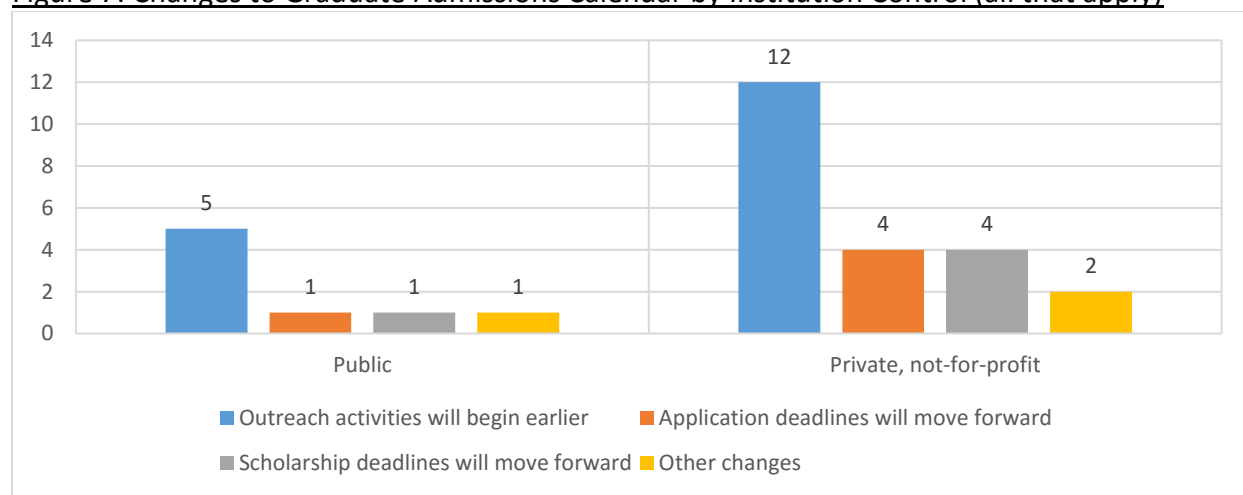


Figure 8: Changes to Graduate Admissions Calendar by Institution Size (all that apply)

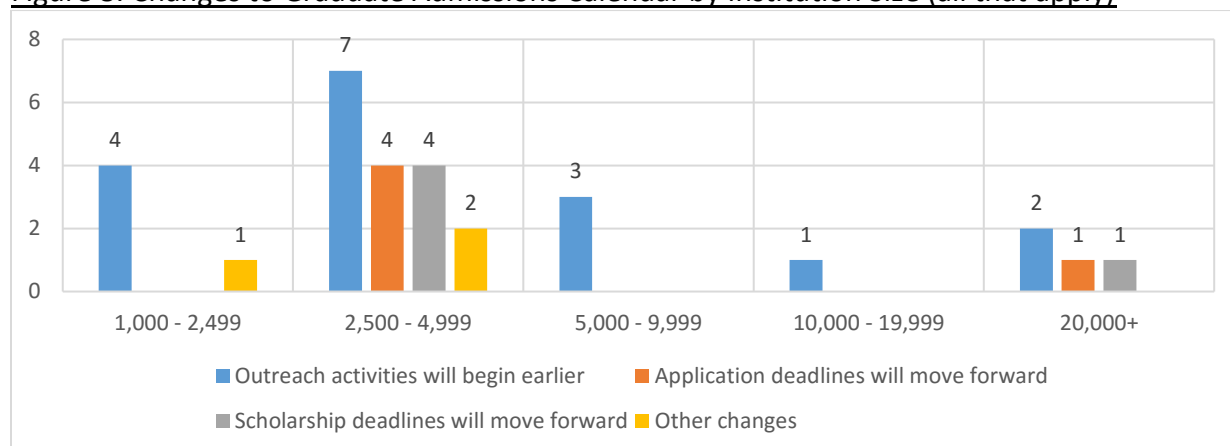


Table 2: Other Changes to Graduate Admissions Calendar*

***raw data**

Aid needs to be packaged earlier, which means the fiscal numbers for the next academic year need to be submitted earlier.

Earlier notification.

Implementation Concerns

Figure 9: Implementation Concerns by Institution Type (all that apply)

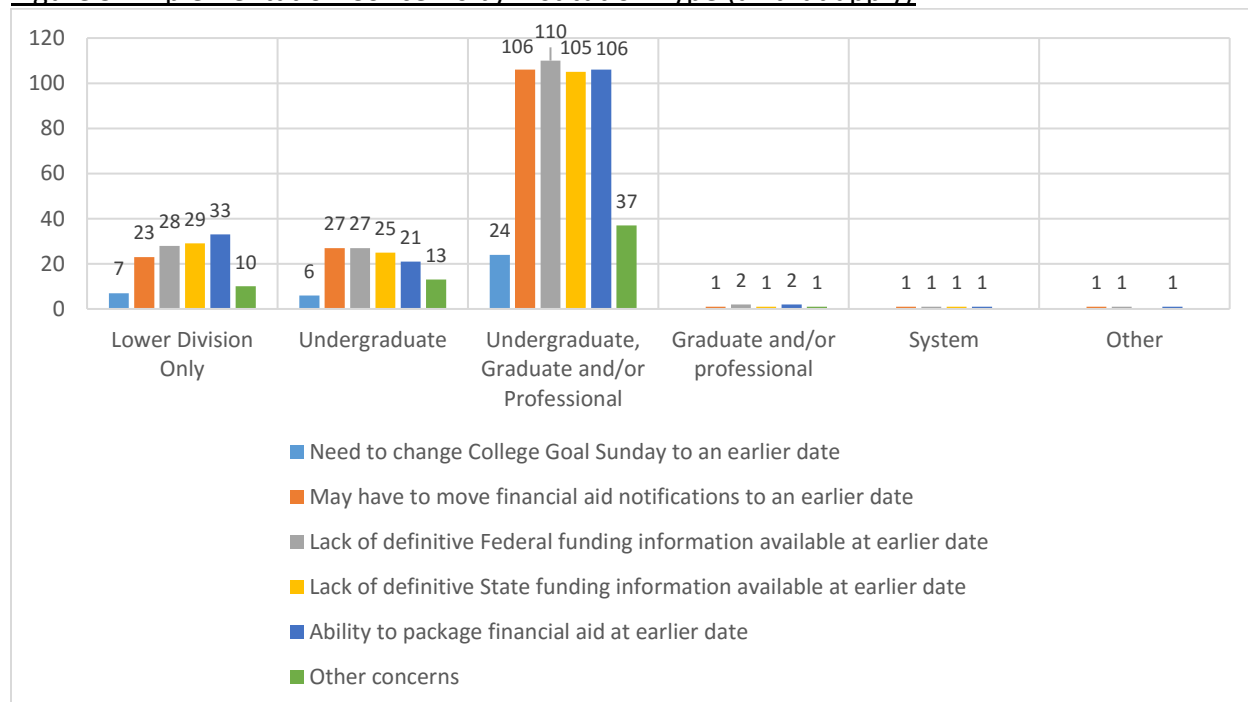


Table 3: Other Implementation Concerns *

*raw data

Education of prospective students.
Returning students will submit the same tax return for two years, which will be confusing.
Change in priority aid deadline.
Will admissions change like we are asking them to?
Receiving and installing updated financial aid regulations in our student system.
Overall Education.
BOT unable to provide tuition rate increases at an earlier date.
Whether ED will provide SIS updates to vendor in time for schools to implement and test before Oct 1.
Marketing, making students aware of new opportunity.
Lack of final tuition and fee information for the following year.
Primary concern is lack of institutional COA information so we can accurately package and communicate with FAFSA applicants.
Inability to package FINAID at earlier date as a result of lack of definitive State funding.
Impact on catalog publication and deadlines.
Hyper competition in admissions space.
Earlier cycle start-up.
School budgets and new tuition rates are not available at earlier date.
Concerns about packaging new vs. returning students' timeline.
College fairs and secondary-school activities seem to be occurring earlier, thus causing more conflicts for our recruiters.
Cultural shift will not be understood by parents and students and high school counselors.
These are implementation realities, not concerns. It's a good thing overall.
Need to determine new priority funding deadline.
Delivered changes from Oracle.
Prior prior year, lots of things change income wise in 2 years, may increase change of circumstance appeals.
Will we adjust scholarship deadline dates?
Not sure how discrepant information will be identified between 15-16 and 16-17 and how much follow up it may require.
IRS tax filing info is not available until the next year. This will create redundant workload.
And inability to award institutional aid due to not knowing The size and makeup of the applicant pool.
Software systems being compliant.
Changing student behavior to apply earlier.
What competitor institutions will do.
Lack of finalized/approved costs at the earlier date.
Ability of software to be ready on time.
FAMS software updates being available.



Processing multiple financial aid years and the responsibility for ensuring irregularities are found.
Verification of income data for 2017-2018 if not entered exactly as submitted for 2016-2017 will result in additional work for the financial aid office.
Uncertainty of rollout/compliance by Banner/Ellucian
SIS upgrades and testing at earlier date.
Our information system vendor is not currently set up to accommodate the earlier application date.
DOE still does not have their act together to allow us to really package aid any earlier.
Need to set new student enrollment, retention, revenue, and discount goals earlier.
Year round yield activities and communications will be required to keep students engaged.
Additional work it creates. Administratively, we could be ending one year, and working on two more.
State grant timetable.
Early Action deadline for admission is 12/01/16. Although Admissions will start reading files earlier this coming year, admissions decisions are not likely to go out before Thanksgiving. Will we have the systems changes in place and tested in time to allow Financial Aid to generate packages beginning December 1st?
Need to be sure the May 1 national candidate reply date does not move earlier. This is critically important to the profession and to the students!
FA Vendor having new year release early.
Need to move up institutional scholarship deadlines and decision dates.
May see an increase in Professional Judgement requests, based on changed circumstances since the prior, prior year.
Admissions wanting to do full class registration earlier.
SIS release being ready in time.
Melt.
Will cause many students to apply for wrong aid year.
Limited personnel already strapped for time; this is a complication that ultimately adversely affects the student if the college is unable to deliver timely analysis.
Verification flag on 2nd year of using 2015 taxes.
Number to applicants due to being a community college.
Increase in Professional Judgement.
Need for earlier availability of Federal Dependent/Independent Verification Worksheet.
Unknowns and how students/families will respond.
How will this impact under-represented populations who tend to apply for admission and aid later; not just at our institution but nationally.
Whether our Student Information System can be ready in time to prepare packages earlier
Institutional budget information may not be available.
Preparedness of software providers.
Conflicting information.



Will all sub-populations of students adopt new cycle dates at same rate.
Need to use professional judgement and make guesses as to the state and federal aid that will be available to our students.
Professional judgment impact.
Tuition Planners will need to reach out earlier! This staff will need to be hired and trained earlier - cost impact to Financial Aid.
Peaks in operations shifting.
How to process verification.

Respondents were provided with the opportunity to submit additional thoughts about the FAFSA changes and many did (Table 4). Several expressed further concern about the timing of Pell Grant funding finalization and the ability of the software vendors to make the required programming updates in a timely manner. Others commented that there will be few to no changes at their institution because of their institutional type or few changes this year with more anticipated next year. Some like the changes and anticipate it will help spread out the awarding work load across a longer period of time while others think the changes may give selective and nimble institutions a competitive edge for student enrollment and that some aspects of the awarding process will actually take more work with this new format.

Table 4: Additional Comments About the 2017-2018 FAFSA Changes

I wish they had implemented prior prior year without changing FAFSA availability from January to October. I think the October date is too early for all students and will actually be a detriment to underserved students.
If I understand correctly, this was mostly made so that low-income students can receive their aid packages earlier in the decision process. It will take years for that to actually happen. We are finding that the majority of students who are aware of the change are those that have traditionally applied early...which at our institution are the more affluent students.
The change is well-intentioned and will make the aid application process easier for students, but may lead to such early priority aid dates, that the students that need the assistance most may miss out.
I think it will take a year for changes at the campus level to be put in place.
Given our position in the food chain of higher ed (non-selective, regional, public university without an early decision or early action program) and the students who enroll (a large first gen pop) and our lack of institutional aid I do not see much changing for us.



It is difficult to have everything in place a year in advance for curriculum so that students can also have the option of new programs or revised programs that need state approval. It may require that new students won't have the option of enrolling in a new program until the following year due to this change.
Any time the feds slip in an odd rule at the last minute, October in this case, it's a concern that there's not proper optimization happening, nor is there a strong planning partnership between the federal government and the higher education sectors.
We will align our financial aid application filing deadlines with our admission application filing deadlines.
We are taking a phased approach to response to this change - with limited changes this coming year and more significant changes for the 2017-18 year.
Our concerns are the release of the Pell Table, if it is released in January still we may not change our packaging processes much as it will cause double work, package under current table then repackage under new table. Also the release of information to the software vendors, the Dept. of ED needs to release information in the summer before the FAFSA opens in Oct. For PPY not in the Fall like they are planning to do. If these things change, then yes we could change our timeline in regards to admissions.
This will be a learning year. There may be unanticipated changes in student/parent behavior as a result of the earlier FAFSA date that impact enrollment patterns, student decision-making, etc.
We are a community college. We plan to do a lot of outreach to our students and community about this.
Will also speed up the setting of next year tuition pricing by four months.
Concerns regarding the verification process.
I'm worried that private institutions will be more nimble and able to push their award packaging earlier while publics (particularly system institutions) will be hamstrung and continue to operate more or less on the previous timeline. Competitiveness factors at play....
Worried about the increase of the tendency for families to negotiate financial aid awards.
The marketing really should just be about the new NORM, not that this is different, most students and parents don't know what the norm is, we should be promoting the opportunity of knowing resources earlier in their decision making process.
The change does impact setting tuition and fees for the 2017-18 year and adjusting the timing of presenting to the Board of Trustees and the Board approving the new rates. This survey does not address the systemic changes being made in finance.
It will only be good for students IF (and only IF) the Department of Education is able to release final Pell Charts, each State is able to provide state grants amounts and funding just as early, etc. So to answer the 2nd question accurately; I would say it depends.
Our application already goes out to seniors in mid-August and since we review and admit on a rolling basis, the new FAFSA date does not impact us having to do anything to our application process earlier than we already do.



Frustrating part is Dept. of Ed will not release Pell tables earlier. We'll have to send two award letters to students now, so this is causing more work on our part.
The concept and intent is valid and appropriate. The opportunity to better inform, educate and advise potential new students is significant, but in the absence of technology enhancements, state and federal notification of critical data points that drive financial aid packaging, this effort may limit the aforementioned opportunities and minimize this effort to that of a poorly coordinated and implemented plan.
Will appeals for aid increase, now that we are using 2-year old data.
This will ultimately be a good move for students. It will assist them in planning. The transition year will have some hurdles; however, eventually, students will get used to the change. The primary benefit is that the new FAFSA makes it easier for students to use the IRS data retrieval tool on the FAFSA, which will increase accuracy and ultimately lower the paper work for students.
While the date the FAFSA is available is certainly earlier, I don't know that majority of students that apply to our institution will begin their college search process and financial aid filing any earlier.
IRS Data Tool is great when it works. However, we have had quite a few students who cannot utilize the tool. We have some concerns on when and how this new date will roll out to students and parents.
This change in procedure will not result in financial aid awards being processed earlier due to funding amounts not being available until early spring 2017. It will be difficult for the financial aid office to know Pell Grant amounts if the Pell table is not available at the time the 2017-2018 FAFSA information is processed.
I think this change is great, because it will allow our financial aid office to complete financial aid packages more quickly. As a result, the hope is that students will make decision quickly about whether to accept offers of admission.
Wise campuses will sit back and wait and see how all this works.
I think that this is a needed change to help families be better prepared for attending and paying for college/higher education.
Need as much communication as possible.
I believe this make the student have more work. Using estimated taxes, I assume will make many have to complete twice
Using prior, prior year is a good standard. It takes the edge of the timing of tax season and applying for FA.
This might impact student eligibility adversely due to short timeline for term grade submissions and SAP runs.
We are modifying our deadline for some need-based scholarship consideration for new students to FAFSA submission by January 1. We hope to have full packages out to new students a couple of weeks earlier than in the past.
FINALLY!
We will institute Early Decision for fall '17 in response to the early FAFSA. We'll now have sufficient financial information to make official award offers to students and allow



them to have the information necessary to fulfill the binding conditions of ED admission.
The changes will not change the financial aid calendar but will certainly assist students with the application process. Students will no longer have to wait to complete the tax return for the prior calendar year as the prior-prior year data will be used which will be much more convenient and helpful. Awarding will take place much earlier giving students the ability to choose where they want to attend college knowing what their resources will be. As for the admissions undergraduate calendar, not sure if that will change but am guessing it will not as our admissions office is extremely pro-active in recruiting.
We hope that this will facilitate improvements in the timing of financial aid offers to applicants so they can make a college selection with a complete picture of their financial aid package and the school.
Way too early - especially for Community Colleges. For private colleges this works well for early admissions.
Our FA staff has issues keeping up with incoming students, so, to have them package students a year out is ridiculous. Cumbersome and a huge time waster! Bottom line, we serve the student and I only foresee an adverse benefit to the student and a potential duplication of effort by the college.
I think Prior Prior Year has the potential to be a game changer for those who leverage it well!
It isn't changing our admissions calendar, but we are going to send out awards earlier.
We are still evaluating the impact this change will have on the University.
We are an open admissions community college. We anticipate this will be a benefit for our student population.
Waiting for guidance on Professional Judgement policies.
Currently, the institution has no plans to change our timeline for admissions and awarding of aid. However, we may make adjustments after the first year of using PPY.
Wonder if this will lead more institutions to push early action/early decision; will students feel pressure to accept/deposit sooner than May 1
From a recruitment standpoint, this is a difficult deadline because we are still working in August through mid-September on dual enrollment registration and then we go straight to college fair season at the end of September.

Questions regarding this or other AACRAO research should be directed to Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO Director of Research, at wendyk@aacrao.org.



Appendix A: AACRAO July 2016 60-Second Survey

AACRAO 60-Second Survey - 2017-18 FAFSA (aka Early FAFSA)

Introduction

Beginning on Oct. 1, 2016, students will be able to fill out the FAFSA for the 2017–2018 school year. (In the past, they had to wait until January 1). In addition, applicants will no longer need to estimate income and tax information and will be able to retrieve their data directly from the IRS, right from the first day the FAFSA is available.

Were you aware of this change?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

In general, do you view this change as good for students?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Will this change your institution's undergraduate admissions calendar?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How will it change the undergraduate admissions calendar?

Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student outreach activities will begin earlier.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Application deadlines will move forward.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scholarship deadlines will move forward.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify... _____

Will this change your institution's graduate admissions calendar?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How will it change the graduate admissions calendar?

Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student outreach activities will begin earlier.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Application deadlines will move forward.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scholarship deadlines will move forward.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify... _____

Does your institution have implementation concerns?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What are the implementation concerns?

Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Need to change College Goal Sunday to an earlier date
<input type="checkbox"/>	May have to move financial aid notifications to an earlier date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of definitive Federal funding information available at earlier date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of definitive State funding information available at earlier date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to package financial aid at earlier date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify... _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify... _____



Identify your primary area of responsibility on campus.

<input type="radio"/>	Academic Advising
<input type="radio"/>	Admissions
<input type="radio"/>	Financial Aid
<input type="radio"/>	Institutional Research
<input type="radio"/>	International Admissions
<input type="radio"/>	Records and Registration
<input type="radio"/>	Student Affairs
<input type="radio"/>	Enrollment Management
<input type="radio"/>	Academic affairs
<input type="radio"/>	Other, please specify... _____

Additional comments about the 2017-18 FAFSA

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Appendix B: Respondent Count by State

State	Count
AK	2
AL	6
AR	4
AZ	5
CA	30
CO	8
CT	1
DC	2
DE	1
FL	11
GA	16
HI	2
IA	13
ID	3
IL	26
IN	10
KS	14
KY	6
LA	5
MA	15
MD	11
ME	2
MI	17
MN	10
MO	16
MS	2
MT	6
NC	14
ND	3
NE	9
NH	2
NJ	8
NM	5
NV	2
NY	37
OH	24
OK	4
OR	8



PA	29
RI	1
SC	8
SD	3
TN	10
TX	29
UT	4
VA	10
VT	2
WA	6
WI	15
WV	2
WY	1
Grand Total	480



Appendix C: Respondent Count by Institution Type, Size and Control

Type	Count
Lower Division Only	96
Undergraduate	65
Undergraduate, Graduate and/or Professional	300
Graduate and/or professional	16
Other	1
System	2
Grand Total	480

Size	Count
Under 1,000	74
1,000 - 2,499	118
2,500 - 4,999	102
5,000 - 9,999	75
10,000 - 19,999	63
20,000+	48
Grand Total	480

Control	Count
Public	243
Private, not-for-profit	226
Private, proprietary	11
Grand Total	480



	Count
Public	243
Lower Division Only	91
Under 1,000	10
1,000 - 2,499	16
2,500 - 4,999	31
5,000 - 9,999	20
10,000 - 19,999	13
20,000+	1
Undergraduate	17
1,000 - 2,499	10
2,500 - 4,999	5
5,000 - 9,999	2
Undergraduate, Graduate and/or Professional	132
1,000 - 2,499	7
2,500 - 4,999	17
5,000 - 9,999	34
10,000 - 19,999	34
20,000+	40
Graduate and/or professional	1
1,000 - 2,499	1
System	2
20,000+	2
Private, not-for-profit	226
Lower Division Only	4
Under 1,000	3
2,500 - 4,999	1
Undergraduate	43
Under 1,000	17
1,000 - 2,499	21
2,500 - 4,999	4
10,000 - 19,999	1
Undergraduate, Graduate and/or Professional	163
Under 1,000	27
1,000 - 2,499	58
2,500 - 4,999	40
5,000 - 9,999	19
10,000 - 19,999	14
20,000+	5
Graduate and/or professional	15



Under 1,000	12
1,000 - 2,499	2
2,500 - 4,999	1
Other	1
Under 1,000	1
Private, proprietary	11
Lower Division Only	1
Under 1,000	1
Undergraduate	5
Under 1,000	2
1,000 - 2,499	1
2,500 - 4,999	2
Undergraduate, Graduate and/or Professional	5
Under 1,000	1
1,000 - 2,499	2
2,500 - 4,999	1
10,000 - 19,999	1
Grand Total	480



Appendix D: Respondent's Primary Area of Responsibility

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Academic Advising		0.4%	2
Admissions		22.0%	105
Financial Aid		16.6%	79
Institutional Research		1.3%	6
International Admissions		0.8%	4
Records and Registration		22.9%	109
Student Affairs		2.9%	14
Enrollment Management		27.3%	130
Academic affairs		1.7%	8
Other, please specify...		4.2%	20
Total Responses			477

