

JAN 2024

CAFAA NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Colorado Association of
Financial Aid Administrators



2425 FAFSA Now Open

HOLLY DAUGHERTY,
COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Earlier this month, the Department of Education announced the online 24-25 FAFSA is now open 24/7!

For anyone trying to access the form in early January you would have seen in real time the soft launch period of the 2024-25 FAFSA. During the soft launch period, users may have experienced the waiting room feature while the Department of Education monitored site performance and conducted pauses for maintenance. These pauses allowed them the ability to make updates to improve the user experience for students and families in real time. In the short few weeks since its launch, the waiting room feature and scheduled maintenance have seemed to subside allowing users the ability to complete their applications as intended.

However, as with most new things, the Better FAFSA still has some challenges to overcome. Since its launch, the Department of Education has begun to track issues as they arise. Available online this [2425 FAFSA Issues Alert](#) list includes known issues, status updates and noted work arounds. It is suggested that stakeholders should bookmark this page to refer to for regular status updates and resources related to the 2024-25 FAFSA launch.

For the users not experiencing issues while completing the FAFSA there are definitely some changes to be excited about!

- Average completion time with DDX 15-20 minutes.
- The smart capabilities and logic based flow creates less questions from individuals.
- The instantaneous email notifications of providing consent, inviting contributors, and status of submitted applications.

Compared to previous years, these all come as welcome changes and we are excited to see the final functional application.



This Issue:

2425 FAFSA Now Open
PAGE 01

2425 CASFA Now Open
PAGE 02

Are You Being FAFSA Blind?
PAGE 03

Institution Spotlight &
CAFAA Membership
Renewal
PAGE 04

Connect With RMAFAA
PAGE 05

Thank You for All You Do!
Announcements, Events, &
Updates
PAGE 06



24-25 CASFA Now Open

HOLLY DAUGHERTY, COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

As promised, the State of Colorado simultaneously launched the 24-25 Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CASFA) on Dec. 31. Prior to its launch, CDHE gave a demonstration of the 24-25 CASFA during their Lunch and Learn Series on Dec. 12. You can catch up on the demonstration as well as updates to the 24-25 CASFA by watching the recorded training from [CDHE](#).



Tips for supporting students and families completing the CASFA:

- Encourage the inputting of accurate information and avoiding typos.
- Names - Applicants should use legal names associated with SSN/ITIN. For individuals without SSN/ITIN CDHE recommends using the name associated with the colleges/universities the student has applied to.
- The form is a logic based smart form additional sections will appear depending on applicant's responses.
 - ex. If a student is deemed a dependent student from their personal/unusual circumstance questions, they will have new sections appear to include parent personal and financial information.
- Residency - Colorado has one year residency required for Higher Education purposes.
 - ex. If a student moved to Colorado in 2019 they became a resident in 2020.
- Students with unusual circumstances preventing a parent from including their information will be deemed as Provisional Independent and it will be the responsibility of the Financial Aid Offices to follow up with the student.
- Students/parents will need to manually input financial data from their 2022 tax returns.
- Parents w/o SSN or ITIN need to enter all zeros.
- Everyone must e-sign the application.
- Students must request parent signatures through email.
- Parents will need to log in and sign electronically.
- Encourage families to check spam email boxes.

If your team is needing resources regarding the CASFA please visit the [CDHE website](#) for fact sheets, resource guides, and printable guide sheets CASFA eligibility.

HELP NEEDED!

CAFFA HAS BEEN RECEIVING REQUESTS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AT VARIOUS FAFSA COMPLETION EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE

PLEASE [CHECK OUT THE LIST OF EVENTS AND HELP WHERE YOU CAN](#)

CASFA OR FAFSA WHICH AM I ELIGIBLE FOR?

CASFA (COLORADO APPLICATION FOR STATE FINANCIAL AID)	FAFSA (FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL AID)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a Non-U.S. citizen resident and/or non-resident student • I qualify as a Colorado ASSET student • I have attended a Colorado high school for at least one year immediately before graduation or completed a GED in Colorado • I have continuous and physical presence in Colorado for 12 months before the start of the semester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a U.S. citizen resident or an Eligible Noncitizen • I am a U.S. permanent resident and I have a Permanent Resident Card (I-151 I-551 or I-551c) • I have an I-94 • I am considered one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ "Refugee" ◦ "Asylum Granted" ◦ "Cuban-Haitian Entrant" (Status Pending) ◦ "Conditional Entrant" ◦ Victims of human trafficking, T-visa ◦ "Parolee" (provide evidence from USCIS)



A Wise Person Once Said...

"ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS
TAKES AS MUCH SKILL AS
GIVING THE RIGHT ANSWERS."
-ROBERT HALF

Are You Being FAFSA Blind?

HOLLY DAUGHERTY COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Recently, I was approached by a colleague on campus requesting that we change the language around our “FAFSA Night” presentations to be more inclusive to those not eligible for federal financial aid. This opened up a deeper conversation in our office of how best to advertise the process for applying for all types of financial aid. Of course, we have FAFSA and CASFA, but what about individuals who are not eligible for either application? How can we promote these events and still provide resources to all audiences? Have we been too heavily focused on training our campus partners about FAFSA Simplification and neglecting to teach them about CASFA? Is there a way to divide an event audience into “categories”

without creating feelings of exclusion or undue bias?

While some of these questions were not easy to answer and some actually a bit uncomfortable to discuss, it was an important step to take. We met with our campus partners, Admissions Counselors, Academic Advisors and the Student Accounts Office to learn about what they see from our student population. While help completing the FAFSA/CASFA was still a top priority, other topics that came up included: applying for the College Opportunity Fund (COF), finding and applying to internal/external scholarship opportunities, creating a semester budget to compare costs, and including more information and resources in the presentation that makes sense to all audience members. These are just some of the topics we discussed as we worked to rebrand our standing “FAFSA Night Presentation” into “Financial Aid Night”.



Here are the four revamped topics we developed:

- Get help completing the FAFSA/CASFA
- Tips & tricks finding scholarship opportunities and time for completing scholarship applications
- Encourage CO residents planning to attend an in-state school to apply for COF
- Meet with a financial aid counselor to understand COA, types of aid, and discuss options for paying for college

Working with diverse populations can be challenging. Skills in understanding diversity are essential to creating a more inclusive campus environments. These skills help you become more accommodating to and accepting of the varied needs, lifestyles and expertise of all different people. While our work in financial aid can be littered with federal and state regulations saying “what’s not possible”; it is our responsibility and duty as financial aid administrators to ensure we are also knowledgeable in what is possible. We need to be able to identify who can qualify for financial aid through formal aid applications (FAFSA/CASFA) as well as have the tools at the ready to help find other resources that could benefit students and their families.

As you begin to evaluate if you are being “FAFSA Blind” one very simple way to change the language around this topic is to look at how many times your office uses the term “FAFSA Required”. Could this actually read “FAFSA or CASFA Required”?



Want to be included in our Institution Spotlight?

SUBMIT THE [INSTITUTION SPOTLIGHT FORM](#) ON THE CAFAA WEBSITE

FOR QUESTIONS ON SUBMITTING EMAIL:

HDAUGHERTY@COLORADOMESA.EDU

Annual CAFAA Membership Renewal Now Open

THE CAFAA BOARD

Remember, CAFAA membership renewals are due! Account Administrators please renew the membership for your whole institution, as our secondary members will not have this access.

Please be sure to:

- Review and update your institution's roster of members
 - Remove those no longer at your institution
 - Update contact information and current positions as needed
- Payment of membership dues will be processed by credit card
 - If credit card payment is not an option for your institution please reach out to Veronica Valles at vvalles@regis.edu, CAFAA Treasurer

If you know of someone who is interested in joining, please have them visit the [CAFAA website](#) to learn more and join online.



Connect With RMAFSA

RMAFSA COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Have you connected with The Rocky Mountain Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (RMAFSA)?

RMAFSA is our regional association serving the Rocky Mountain region states of Colorado, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. They foster dialogue among states and serve as a platform for the discussion of various financial aid policies, best practices and and issues. There are multiple ways to connect with RMAFSA. Take a moment and check out their online Blog or any of their social media channels.



Along with helping to foster professional connections RMAFSA offers a variety of training opportunities throughout the year:

- **Summer Institute** - June - a nationally recognized week of training for financial aid administrators. - [Registration will open soon for 2024!](#)
- **Annual Conference** - October - a four day conference focused around various topics within financial aid and a great way to connect with peers throughout the region.
- **Leadership Pipeline** (application required) - A mentor/mentee based program designed to foster a heightened understanding of leadership principles - unique to the profession of financial aid administration -and provide direct exposure to association leadership, governance, structure, needs, and challenges.

Learn more about these opportunities and more online at rmasfaa.org.

Get Ready to Take Flight With CAFAA 2024

ANNUAL CAFAA CONFERENCE
MAY 8-10, 2024
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO





EVENTS, UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

To have your event or announcement included please email hdaugherty@coloradomesa.edu

Announcing Virtual PDT Opportunities

The Professional Development Committee will continue to host our virtual Lunch and Learn Series the second Tuesday of each month.

- Tuesday Feb 13th
- Tuesday March 12th
- Tuesday April 9th
- Tuesday May 14th

An email with meeting links and monthly topics will be sent out soon.

We look forward to learning with you!

Call for CAFAA Conference Presenters

As we gear up for the upcoming Colorado Association of Financial Aid Administrators (CAFAA) Conference, we are thrilled to invite you to take center stage as a presenter at this prestigious event. The Programming Committee is seeking dynamic presentations that delve into the latest trends, best practices, and transformative ideas in financial aid administration.

This is your chance to share your insights, innovations, and success stories with a captive audience of peers, industry leaders, and emerging professionals.

Ready to be a part of this enriching experience? Simply click on the following link to submit your proposal and secure your spot as a presenter:

[Sign Up Link](#)

Upcoming Events:

Monthly Virtual PDT
Sessions
SECOND TUESDAY OF
EACH MONTH
12:00 PM

CAFAA Spring Conference
Colorado Springs, CO
MAY 8-10

Members

ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY - AIMS COMMUNITY COLLEGE - ARAPAHOE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - BEL-RAE INSTITUTE OF ANIMAL TECHNOLOGY - CAMPUSLOGIC - CITIZENS ONE STUDENT LOANS - CO DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION - COLLEGE AVE. STUDENT LOANS - COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY - COLORADO COLLEGE - COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEMS - CDHE - COLORADO GEARUP - COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY - COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE - COLORADO NORTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE - COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES - COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, FORT COLLINS - COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF AURORA - COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER CREDIBLE - DENVER SEMINARY - DISCOVER STUDENT LOANS - EARNEST - ELM RESOURCES FORT LEWIS COLLEGE - FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNDING U - INCEPTIA IRON BRIDGE RESOURCES - LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION - METRO STATE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER - MPOWER FINANCING - NELNET - NORTHEASTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE - PAUL MITCHELL THE SCHOOL DENVER - PIKES PEAK COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLATT COLLEGE - PUEBLO COMMUNITY COLLEGE - RED ROCKS COMMUNITY COLLEGE REGIS UNIVERSITY - ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN - SALLIE MAE SCHOLARNET - SOFI - TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES - TRINIDAD STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, COLORADO SPRINGS - UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, DENVER - UNIVERSITY OF DENVER UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO - WESTERN COLORADO UNIVERSITY

Membership renewals will open January, 2024

Be sure to update your institution/organization's roster to include all active members.

We Want to Hear From You

Our Communications Committee is working hard on getting you up to date information. We will be updating our social media channels, website and blogs in the near future. If you have an idea for content we would love to hear from you:

- Holly Daugherty, Chair: hdaugherty@coloradomesa.edu
- Veronica Valles, Chair: vvalles@regis.edu

Newsletter updates, including spotlight sections and upcoming events, must be submitted no later than the 15th of each month to be included in the following monthly newsletter