

Student Loan Forms Are Still A Nightmare

"In spite of at least eight years of promise after promise from politicians that they would make the FAFSA easier, the form remains a barrier to college for many students. The first significant reform took six years to finally make its way to students, who are seeing it for the first time now, as they face deadlines this spring to complete and submit the crucial questionnaire. It's unclear whether these changes will have an impact on the estimated 2.3 million students a year the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators says would qualify for aid but don't fill out the FAFSA," *TIME* reports.

"About 45 percent of high school seniors don't complete the form, according to the Education Department. The White House has announced a push to increase those numbers, not by making more improvements to the FAFSA, but by imploring students to finish it and recruiting mentors to help them.

'All you have to do to access that aid is fill out this one little form,' First Lady Michelle Obama told a group of high school students in Virginia. 'It's so simple.'

In fact, there are still 100 questions on the FAFSA's six pages, many of which have several parts and ask for sensitive financial data beyond what's required even on a tax return. Some are straightforward, but many are so convoluted they require their own separate sections of instructions.

Take, for example, Question 45, which has 10 parts. It requires that students list any 'untaxed income not reported in items 45a through 45h, such as workers' compensation, disability, etc. Also include the untaxed portions of health savings accounts from IRS Form 1040—line 25. Don't include extended foster care benefits, student aid, earned income credit, additional child tax credit, welfare payments, untaxed Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Workforce Investment Act educational benefits, on-base military housing or a military housing allowance, combat pay, benefits from flexible spending arrangements (e.g. cafeteria plans), foreign income exclusion or credit for federal tax on special fuels.'

And that's just Part I."

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