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A Slimmer, Spiffier Look for FAFSA

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, accompanied by Jill Biden, released a new, more streamlined Federal Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) January 1, highlighting the administration's serious commitment to simplifying the aid application process. Secretary Spellings also had made FAFSA simplification a federal goal in her last years in office, garnering strong bi-partisan support.

The most recent changes follow improvements made last summer. The on-line form now uses "smart technology," so that questions not applicable to certain students disappear from their application. For example, low-income students won't be asked about assets. Other examples of changes include:

- * Only applicants who have changed addresses within the past five years will be asked about their state and date of legal residency.
- * Only returning students will be asked about prior drug convictions.
- * There will be no questions regarding veterans' benefits.
- * Some questions can now be completed by check boxes.

Later this month, students applying for spring semester aid (2009-10 FAFSA) will be able to import tax data from the IRS. By summer, students applying for 2010-11 aid will also be able to import tax data to the FAFSA.

Background and Earlier Changes

For many years, experts have claimed that the FAFSA's complexity has been a barrier to college attendance by low-income and minority students.

Recommendations for streamlining the process have been made by such varied groups as the federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (ACFSA), The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS), the College Board, and the Spellings Commission. In response, Congress and the Department of Education have taken steps to improve the process, and they continue working on changes presenting technical and political challenges.

Initial steps toward simplification in 2007 and 2008 were a particular interest of Rep. Rahm Emmanuel (D-Ill.), now President Obama's Chief of Staff. Also a key player in some of the more innovative approaches to simplifying the form is Bob Shireman, formerly head of TICAS and a member of the ACSFA panel. He's now deputy undersecretary at the Department of Education.

Further simplification could be ahead as Congress considers more adjustments to the Higher

Education Act's need analysis formula to allow even fewer questions. Among the key questions being debated is whether to remove all assets from the formula.

While simplification is a hot political topic, some policy analysts continue to have some reservations. If the federal government goes too far and removes too many questions, they fear, too many people who have the means to pay for their college education could end up with too much aid. This would add further cost pressures to the Pell Grant program.

There also are concerns that states or individual colleges may find the FAFSA doesn't provide enough information to allow them to determine how to award their own scholarship money. NAICU explored this concern last fall in a survey on some of the proposed changes currently being considered by Congress.

For more information, contact Maureen Budetti, Maureen@naicu.edu

U-CAN Profiles Go Live With Updated 2009-10 Data

U-CAN, a consumer information Web site for students considering private, nonprofit colleges and universities, has unveiled newly updated data for hundreds of institutions. The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) developed and maintains U-CAN (University & College Accountability Network).

The updated Web site includes the most recent information available in areas important to prospective students and their families, including admissions, enrollment, cost of attendance, student aid, faculty, and more.

This is the third update to U-CAN since the Web site launched in September 2007. In addition to the new data, U-CAN offers 147 searchable fields and 25 "clickable" buttons that link to additional information found on individual campus Web sites.

"Many families are overwhelmed by the college search process, and don't believe they are getting the information and guidance necessary to make an informed choice," said NAICU President David L. Warren. "U-CAN helps prospective students and their families make sense of the facts they need to find the best college fit."

Since 2007, the number of private colleges and universities signed up to participate has grown from 600 to 808 institutions. The site has had over one million visitors, and reached 2 million page views this week.

NAICU serves as the unified national voice of independent higher education. With more than 1,000 member institutions and associations nationwide, NAICU reflects the diversity of private, nonprofit higher education in the United States. NAICU members enroll 85 percent of all students attending private institutions. They include traditional liberal arts colleges, major research universities, church- and faith-related institutions, historically black colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, single-sex colleges, art institutions, two-year colleges, and schools of law, medicine, engineering, business, and other professions.

For more information, contact Libby May, Libby@naicu.edu

NAICU Annual Meeting, Jan 31- Feb. 4 Limited Conference-rate Rooms Left

We're now putting the final touches on the NAICU Annual Meeting here in D.C. at the end of the month. The online schedule reflects the nearly-complete lineup of sessions and speakers - Meet the Press moderator David Gregory, political analyst Charlie Cook, New York Times Economics Scene columnist David Leonhardt, Cornell University President David Skorton, Inside Higher Ed editor Scott Jaschik, author Ben Wildavsky, panels on access, persistence and cost, as well as private college/community college cooperation, and much more.

<http://www.naicu.edu/events/2010-annual-meeting>

NEH Challenge Grants in U.S. History and Culture

The National Endowment for the Humanities invites proposals for challenge grants designed to help institutions and organizations secure long-term improvements in and support for humanities activities that advance knowledge of the American experience in both national and international contexts.

The grants are designed to help institutions explore significant themes and events in American history, to advance understanding of how these events have shaped and been shaped by American identity and culture. NEH seeks to support any and all approaches to American history and culture.

Grants can be used directly to support construction or renovation of facilities, acquisition of material and equipment. Long-term depleting or bridging funds may also be used to support programs or activities that are long-lived but not permanent. Grant funds can also be used to establish endowments which generate expendable earnings for program activities. NEH particularly welcomes proposals for programming at America's historic places, as well as applications that address U.S. history and culture through the use of digital technologies.

The application deadline is February 3, 2010. Grants have ranged from \$30,000 to \$1,000,000 in federal funds. Each federal dollar offered must be matched with \$3 in nonfederal funds. Recipients have up to 68 months to raise the matching funds.

Guidelines are posted on the NEH Web site, or contact the NEH Office of Challenge Grants at (202) 606-8309, challenge@neh.gov.

Peace Corps Seeks Participants in Master's Program

The Peace Corps has issued a request for proposals for new colleges and universities in their Master's International (MI) program, integrating graduate study with Peace Corps service. Courses of study included are agriculture, education, business development, environment/natural resources, and youth development. The closing date for proposals is March 15, 2010. Visit the Peace Corps Web site for details, or contact mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov, (800) 424-8580, ext.1812.

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health Seeks Award Nominees

The Community-Campus Partnerships for Health Annual Award recognizes exemplary partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions that are striving to achieve the systems and policy changes needed to overcome the root causes of health, social and economic inequalities.

The award highlights the power and potential of community-campus partnerships as a strategy for social justice. The 2010 award will be announced and recognized during a ceremony at

CCPH's next conference, May 12-15, 2010.

Partnerships nominate themselves and need not be members of CCPH. Partnerships that have applied in the past but did not receive the award or honorable mentions may re-submit. The organization welcomes nominations from any country or nation. Past awardees and honorable mentions have come from Canada, Peru, South Africa, and the United States.

Nominations are due no later than Feb 1, 2010.

For the nomination guidelines, visit the CCPH Web site. Also posted on the site is information on past awardees, answers to frequently asked questions and other resources.

http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/pdf_files/Award10guidelinesf.pdf

New Year's Resolution: Get More Out of Your NAICU Membership

Beyond *Washington Update*, we invite you to take advantage of some of our other electronic services to get the information you need, when you need it.

The **NAICU News Room Daily Update**, now with nearly 2,000 subscribers, provides an overview of the latest higher education news regionally and nationally. The updates are available to both NAICU members and nonmembers via e-mail or RSS feed, and are free of charge. The e-mail version is sent daily around mid-day Eastern time, typically seven days a week, and gives a capsule overview of news items, with links to the full stories. Sign up on our [Web site](#).

NAICU PresNet alerts presidents to breaking news of importance to them, including action alerts and legislative updates. Almost all of our member presidents are on the list, and new presidents are automatically subscribed. *(Note that this list is restricted to NAICU member presidents only.)*

NAICU PRNet carries messages of interest to member public relations staff – media staffing changes, media requests on developing stories, and trends in media coverage.

NAICU GovNet provides legislative information and perspective on issues of interest to campus federal and state relations staff members.

All of the lists are used sparingly to avoid unnecessary messages, and subscribers can easily unsubscribe at any time.

To subscribe to the News Room Daily Update, use the [NAICU Web site link](#) shown above. To sign up for any of the last three lists, send an e-mail to libby@naicu.edu specifying the requested list and including the subscriber's name, title, and institution. *(Note that PresNet, PRNet and GovNet are NAICU member benefits, available only to NAICU member presidents and their staff.)*

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To subscribe, or for member log-in user name and password, e-mail libby@naicu.edu.

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