

The FAFSA is not an Extracurricular Activity

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No answers,
just reflections

About Me

- ▶ First-generation college student
- ▶ First-generation professional
- ▶ Grew up undocumented
- ▶ ISACorps Alumni - worked with Chicago schools to assist students with college and financial aid processes 2011-2013
- ▶ 11+ years working at ISAC
 - ▶ 5 years as (technical) trainer
 - ▶ 4 years managing Training Department



Free Application for Federal Student Aid

- ▶ The FAFSA is the application for federal student aid
- ▶ It is also used in many states for state aid
- ▶ Some institutions use it for institutional aid
- ▶ In Illinois, we also have the Alternative Application (for qualifying undocumented students)
- ▶ For this presentation, the term FAFSA is used for financial aid applications for federal and state financial aid programs



Need-Based Financial Aid Programs

- ▶ Most federal and state financial aid programs are need-based
 - ▶ Pell Grant \$7,395 (2023-24 maximum EFC \$6656)
 - ▶ Monetary Award Program (MAP) Grant \$7,200 (max. EFC ~\$9,000)
 - ▶ Federal Work-Study*
 - ▶ Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)*
 - ▶ Direct Subsidized Loans
- ▶ Need-based programs are awarded to students with high financial need (low-income)

*Federal, need-based program that is only available at participating institutions



The FAFSA Simplification

- ▶ Yes, the FAFSA will experience a major overhaul
- ▶ Yes, it will have less questions
- ▶ No, I will not go into detail on those here
- ▶ Oh...and surprise!!! If you haven't heard, the FAFSA will become available in December (not October).

Our Students

- ▶ Illinois students receive an average of \$13,900 in federal student aid
- ▶ Class of 2022
 - ▶ 54.73% MAP eligible
 - ▶ 47.43% PELL eligible
 - ▶ 30.60% Zero EFC

Why the FAFSA Matters

- ▶ Strong correlation between filing a FAFSA and enrollment
 - ▶ 2016-17 study: Low-income students who filed a FAFSA 127% more likely to enroll
 - ▶ 4.3% more likely to enroll at a 4-year institution
- ▶ Intended to help make college accessible and affordable
- ▶ Helps close the gap between what families can afford and cost of college
- ▶ Oh yeah, and it's a graduation requirement

The FAFSA Graduation Requirement

- ▶ Public Act 101-0180
- ▶ Effective 06/01/2020
- ▶ Students at IL public high school students must complete a FAFSA (or Alternative App) as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma

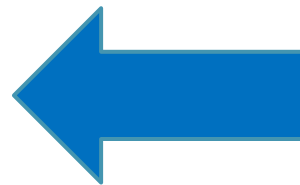
Unfunded Mandates

- ▶ Yes, they exist
- ▶ Yes, they are here to stay
- ▶ Focus on the impact and benefit for students
- ▶ Focus on what we can do

IL Graduation Requirements

- ▶ Language Arts - 4 years
- ▶ Writing-Intensive - 2 years
- ▶ Mathematics - 3 years
- ▶ Computer Literacy - 1 year
- ▶ Science - 2 years
- ▶ Social Science - 2 years
- ▶ Constitution Test
- ▶ Foreign Language - 2 years
- ▶ Electives 1 year
- ▶ File a FAFSA (or Alternative App)
- ▶ State Assessment

One of these is not
like the others



We Know the FAFSA Matters, But...

- ▶ It is the only graduation requirement completed outside of school hours
- ▶ It is treated differently from all other graduation requirements
- ▶ We don't think about it academically

Most Impact, Least Focus

- ▶ It is the only one that requires parents to take time off, even though it is a deciding factor for many students
- ▶ Takes the least amount of time to complete

Constitution
Test

SAT

FAFSA

The Problem

- ▶ It's an equity issue
- ▶ The FAFSA aims to provide an equitable opportunity to a postsecondary education, but why do we treat it like an extracurricular activity?
- ▶ We need to treat it with the same seriousness of other graduation requirements
- ▶ Without the FAFSA, do SAT or the constitution test really matter on their own?

Student & Family Barriers to the Extracurricular FAFSA

- ▶ Staying after school
- ▶ Access to internet or computer at home
- ▶ First-generation students may not know how to navigate processes
- ▶ Home responsibilities
- ▶ Transportation (bus, car, etc.)
- ▶ Other student priorities (tutoring, sports, ROTC, etc.)
- ▶ Availability - time off from work or flexible schedule
- ▶ Other competing priorities (multiple jobs, younger children, etc.)

Inadvertent Messages to Our Students

- ▶ The FAFSA is important but not enough for the school day
- ▶ Stay after school or figure it out on your own
- ▶ Being low-income is no excuse
- ▶ If you really want to go to college, you'll find a way
- ▶ You have to persist and be resilient - try harder!

Shared Responsibility

- ▶ Counselor caseloads are more than twice the recommended amount by ASCA (665:1 v. 250:1)
- ▶ The goal is not to add more work to counselors
- ▶ Make it everyone's responsibility to find a solution
- ▶ Extracurricular activities, usually have
 - ▶ Volunteer or additional pay
 - ▶ Budget for programming
- ▶ Spoiler alert: the FAFSA has neither of those

What You Can Do

- ▶ Encourage your administration to build the FAFSA into the school day
- ▶ Include it in senior seminar/advisory/division
- ▶ Partner with teachers to incorporate it into a lesson
 - ▶ It takes one class period
 - ▶ Computer literacy? Math?
- ▶ Excused absences for college visits can be combined with FAFSA Completion Workshops
- ▶ Reach out to ISAC for support

What ISAC Can Do

- ▶ ISACorps - One-on-one assistance, FAFSA Completion Workshops
- ▶ GAP Access - Track the FAFSA completion
- ▶ Professional Development
- ▶ The FAFSA Symposium
- ▶ PaCE Symposium

What else can we do to
make this happen?

Let's Connect

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