

QU Responds to FAFSA Delay

Brian McGee, QU president

Each year, as they prepare to go on to college, millions of high school seniors in the U.S. are asked to fill out a complicated government form, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Better known as the FAFSA, this form uses financial information from a family's tax returns to determine eligibility, if any, for federal financial aid. Many students have to receive financial aid if they are going to afford college, and the FAFSA must be completed to qualify for federal and state aid.

At Quincy University, nearly all of our undergraduates receive generous financial aid, much of which is supported by generous private donations to QU. Federal financial aid, made available to our students after completing the FAFSA, is also necessary to make QU affordable for many of our students and families. For some of our students from Illinois, completing the FAFSA also makes those students eligible for separate financial grants from the state.

For Fall 2024, though, there's a problem: The federal government has designed what it calls a simpler, easier FAFSA. Simplifying the FAFSA is a fine idea, but the new FAFSA has been repeatedly delayed, even as the old FAFSA has been discontinued. The result is that new students and their families are months behind in completing the FAFSA, and colleges and universities are months behind in awarding financial aid. There is a real risk that some students will become frustrated by these delays and give up on college.

At QU, we want to help our prospective students manage this uncertainty and frustration. So, we are making two important changes to our admissions process for 2024.

First, Quincy University typically asks that new undergraduate students make their college decision by May 1. This year, that preferred deadline will be extended to June 1.

Second, beginning this week, QU is offering to provide an estimate of their QU financial aid award to anyone admitted to our undergraduate program. We believe these estimates will give many students and their family the peace of mind of knowing what scholarships and other aid they can expect to receive. Now that the U.S. Department of Education has provided QU and other universities with the formulas used to calculate these awards, we can quickly estimate this aid, as long as the student and family are willing to provide some information to us.

We hope that other universities will join QU in provided estimated financial aid to their applicants. Millions of students have already waited for months because of government missteps, which have delayed financial decision making for families and have complicated planning for summer jobs and student travel.

At QU, our small and efficient financial aid staff will have to work twice as hard this year in order to provide financial aid information for our new students and families. Without waiting for the final FAFSA information to be given to us in late March (or later), we will do the extra work,

beginning this week, of providing financial aid estimates. For our students and parents, it's the right thing to do.