

# Aim Higher

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Access | Affordability | Completion

## Simple FAFSA Act of 2017 – By the Numbers

Federal student aid, including grants, loans, and work-study, is the largest single source of post-secondary financial aid available to working families. In order to access federal student aid, prospective and currently enrolled students must apply annually through completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

While most students are eligible for some form of federal student aid, thousands of eligible students fail to access available financial aid each year. The FAFSA is universally accessible and free to complete – so why are so many eligible students skipping the FAFSA and forgoing access to Federal student aid? **Many students incorrectly believe they will not qualify for Federal student aid due to their (or their family's) income, age, ethnicity, nationality, or grades.**

For others, the form is too complex and confusing to complete. Others still are simply unaware of the process. As a result, billions of dollars set aside for Federal student aid went unused during the 2017-2018 school year, including [approximately \\$2.3 billion in Federal Pell Grants](#), which are grants students do not need to repay.

*In fact, only [61 percent of high school graduates from the class of 2017](#) completed the FAFSA.*

This FAFSA under-completion results in approximately [2 million currently enrolled Pell-eligible college students who are not benefiting from the Pell Grant program](#). Amongst prospective students who do complete the FAFSA, receive a Pell Grant, and persist past their first year of college, [10 percent fail to re-file](#), despite the overwhelming likelihood of maintaining eligibility for Federal student aid after year one.

Simplifying the FAFSA process will not only ensure that more working families have access to available Federal student aid, but also increase college enrollment and completion. Data show that students who complete the FAFSA are [63 percent more likely to attend college](#) than students who do not complete the form.

FAFSA completion is also strongly linked to college graduation – [52 percent of FAFSA filers](#) earn a bachelor's degree within six years of enrollment, while just 44 percent of non-FAFSA filers graduate.