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# The FAFSA Rollout Was Awful

Natalie Schorr, Digital Media Producer

No, seriously, why was the FAFSA rollout so bad?

First off, saying that the form would be available late December and then finally releasing the form Dec. 30 is such a cop-out on the part of the Department of Education. It is annoying enough that students had to wait two full months to finally access the form, but releasing it at the tail end of their self-imposed deadline is frustrating. Seattle University's priority deadline for the FAFSA is Feb. 1, which gives students only a month to complete the form.

Personally, I do not think that is enough time. While the point of the new FAFSA is to make it easier to fill out, students should still be given ample amount of time to get it done. In the new format, you cannot submit the form until your contributors have filled out their part. Even if a student finishes the form as fast as possible, they are at the mercy of their contributor to be able to actually file the FAFSA.

I think you also have to take into account the fact that the FAFSA was "soft-launched," meaning that for the first few days it was almost impossible to access the form, and then it was only available from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. EST every day. That means that students did not even really have a full month to complete the form before Seattle U's priority deadline.

The most frustrating part to me is that I did actually find it much easier to fill out the form once I was able to access it. That being said, I do not have a particularly complicated situation in the eyes of the FAFSA. I do think it is great that the Department of Education is making changes to make education more accessible. But students also deserve better than a glitchy, "soft-launch" rollout three months late.

Another issue with this FAFSA, is that the math used to calculate financial aid eligibility was not adjusted for inflation. Because this was not adjusted, students are going to qualify for less aid. An important change to this new FAFSA was expanding Pell Grant eligibility, so it seems counterintuitive to me that the calculations were not changed based on inflation.

All of this to say, I think that students deserve a lot better from the Department of Education. With the price of college on the rise, cost of living on the rise and inflation skyrocketing, it seems almost impossible to afford a degree that has become practically essential to finding any type of job. Our government should be doing a lot better to make higher education accessible to students who want to pursue it. While a simplified FAFSA was an important step, I think the janky rollout of the form shows just how little effort the government actually wants to put into students.

This should not be the best that the Department of Education, and our government as a whole, can give us. I am so frustrated that it seems like it is. Students need better. We need more than a form opened three months late that is largely inaccessible for the first few days of the launch. We need student loan forgiveness to actually happen. We need to be able to receive a higher education without putting ourselves in debt for the rest of our lives.

Unfortunately, if this simplified FAFSA form rollout was any indication, these things are not a real priority for the Department of Education. I hope that they see the response to the new form and make real changes. I hope that they see the frustration from students and start working with us instead of against us. I have very little faith in our government actually being able to make change, but I have to hope that they will.

Not that they will see this, but please do better, U.S. Department of Education. And please release the FAFSA on time next year. And if you're feeling up to it, how about you cancel all student debt as well?