Better FAFSA Talking Points
For NCAN Members’ Partners and Stakeholders

1. **Opening date in December, not October:** The opening date for the Better FAFSA will be delayed until December 2023 as opposed to October 1. An exact date has yet to be provided by the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) but is expected long before the release date and will be shared as soon as possible. This change means that the college application process for high school seniors will unfold on a different timeline this fall, and high schools should consider how to rearrange schedules for college application and financial aid assistance. The FAFSA opening date will revert to October 1 again in 2024.

2. **More Pell Grants:** The new form and process will mean more students qualify for Pell Grants—nearly 15% more students, according to the U.S. Department of Education. The maximum award amount for 2024-25 is $7,395— that’s a lot of money for one year of college that doesn’t have to be paid back!

3. **Changes are comprehensive:** The changes coming with the Better FAFSA are the biggest since 1997, when the paper form went online. They also require a total redevelopment of the technology platform on which FAFSA resides.

4. **Changes are numerous:** As expected, the Better FAFSA brings with it plenty of changes as outlined in this article. Highlights include:
   - All FAFSA contributors will need an FSA ID and multifactor authentication will be required when logging in to complete the FAFSA.
   - The number of questions on the new form has been significantly reduced.
   - Students will be able to list up to 20 colleges on the FAFSA.
   - The form is role-based, and each person will only be able to see the questions assigned to them based on their role (e.g., student, parent, or spouse).
   - Families with an adjusted gross income of $60,000 and higher will be required to answer questions about their assets. This is more favorable to families than the previous income threshold, which was $50,000 and only applied to families that filed the 1040 EZ or 1040 A.

5. **Simplification brings benefits:** Despite the delayed opening date, there are numerous improvements coming to the new form which we’ve outlined here. These include:
   - Expansion and increased transparency around Pell Grant eligibility.
   - Individuals without Social Security Numbers (SSNs) will be able to obtain an FSA ID.
   - Data sharing with the IRS will reduce the need for verification.
   - Achieving provisional independence will be easier.
6. **States need to act now**: Students and families need enough time to complete the form. State financial aid deadlines need to be pushed back to April 1, as well as institutional financial aid deadlines and decision days. This will require legislative action. Learn more about NCAN’s efforts in this area.

7. **Make a contingency plan**: How will they deal with the delayed opening date? How will they communicate the delay and changes to their students and families? When will their FAFSA assistance workshops begin? These are all things to consider.

8. **Pell Lookup Tables released**: The 2024-25 Pell Grant Lookup Tables have been released as of May 19. This essential early-awareness tool can be used to determine if students are eligible for the minimum or maximum grant. Learn more about how to use this tool here.

9. **NCAN has a suite of Better FAFSA resources and tools**: NCAN will be here to guide our members and the students they serve through the rollout of the new form. All our Better FAFSA-related content can be found on this page which will be updated as the year progresses. Resources and tools include:
   - Frequently Asked Questions
   - State Policy and Advocacy Toolkit
   - Training Toolkit
   - Awareness Toolkit (coming August 2023!)
   - A list of upcoming training and important dates.
   - A compilation of Better FAFSA-related news.

10. **“Better FAFSA” is FSA’s branding**: Whether or not the Better FAFSA will indeed be “better” is subjective. However, there are many improvements coming as mentioned above.

11. **Improvements for individuals experiencing homelessness and foster care youth**: The Better FAFSA contains important new policies on youth homelessness and foster care that remove barriers and streamline assistance. Read more about this here.