



FINANCIAL AID DEVELOPMENTS

By Kim Slote, policy analyst

PELL GRANT PROGRAM

On Feb. 1, 2016, the U.S. Department of Education published an [Electronic Announcement](#): Federal Pell Grant Program Reconciliation. Information is provided in the announcement to assist both the Financial Aid Office and Business Office with reconciliation of the Federal Pell Grant Program. Definitions for internal and external reconciliation are included. Deadlines are given for data submission and funding cancellation of Pell Grants. Additional information is outlined in the [Question and Answer](#) document that is attached to the electronic announcement.

FEDERAL SCHOOL CODE LIST

The USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#) Feb. 1, 2016: 2016-2017 Federal School Code List of Participating Schools (Feb. 2016). The updated [2016-2017 FSC List of Participating Schools](#) is now available on the Information for Financial Aid Professionals website. The unique codes on this list are assigned by the USDE to schools participating in the Title IV federal student aid programs. Students enter the FSC on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid for each school they wish to receive the processed application results. Instructions are provided in the

announcement for schools that need to correct or update their FSC on the list.

TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY DISCHARGE

An [Electronic Announcement](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 1, 2016: TPD Discharge Information – Keep FFEL Lender/Lender Servicer, FFEL Guaranty Agency Contact Information Current in NSLDS. This announcement is a reminder to Federal Family Education Loan Program lenders/lender servicers and FFEL Program guaranty agencies to maintain current servicer contact information in the National Student Loan Data System. This reminder may also apply to some Federal Perkins Loan Program Institutions. The contact information is used by the NELNET TPD Servicer to send Loan Holder Notification files to loan holders, as well as, in their communications with TPD borrowers throughout the TPD application and monitoring process. Everyone is asked to validate and update their [NSLDS Professional Access Website](#) ORG contacts, listing at least a Primary Contact.

GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT

On Feb. 3, 2016, the USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#): Gainful Employment Electronic Announcement #73



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– Spring 2016 Distribution of Draft GE Completers Lists. The distribution of the Draft GE Completers List will occur in spring 2016. Once the system is ready, Federal Student Aid will generate and send institutions a Draft GE Completers List to their designated Student Aid Internet Gateway mailbox, if they had one or more GE Programs with program completers in award years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. Institutions will have 45 days from the announced date of distribution to submit corrections or challenges to the information provided on the Draft GE Completers Lists. Additional information is provided in the announcement regarding the Data Challenges and Appeals Solution implementation and training opportunities. The [Gainful Employment Information](#) page on the [Information for Financial Aid Professionals](#) website has previously posted dear colleague letters and electronic announcements for more information.

FAFSA

The USDE published an update Feb. 4, 2016, to an [Electronic Announcement](#) originally posted Dec. 29, 2015: 2016-2017 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA on the Web Worksheet and the Student Aid Eligibility Worksheet for Question 23. Both the 2016-2017 FAFSA and FAFSA on the Web Worksheet have

been updated with new versions. The final versions of the 2016-2017 FAFSA and the 2016-2017 Student Aid Eligibility Worksheet for Question 23 are available in English or Spanish at www.fafsa.gov. Students can print the FAFSA and complete it manually or enter their data on a screen-fillable form before printing. The optional FAFSA on the Web Worksheet gives applicants an opportunity to preview questions that may be asked when completing the FAFSA on the Web. Copies of the 2016-2017 FAFSA and FAFSA on the Web Worksheet, English and Spanish, are attached to this announcement.

Dear Colleague Letter [GEN -16-03](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 11, 2016: Use of Professional Judgment When Prior-Prior Year Income is Used to Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This DCL provides a reminder for financial aid administrators of their authority to exercise professional judgment to address special circumstances that may occur for families applying for federal student financial aid using prior-prior year income, starting with the 2017-2018 FAFSA. Professional judgment situations are discussed, along with the importance of documenting the decisions and maintaining that documentation.



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On Feb. 18, 2016, the USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#): Early FAFSA Electronic Announcement #2 – Preparing for 2017-2018 Early FAFSA and Prior-Prior Year. This is the second in a series of announcements to provide the student financial aid community with development and implementation information for the FAFSA changes announced by President Obama Sep. 14, 2015. Institutions are being asked to consider making award notifications earlier, beginning with 2017-2018, to capitalize on the benefits of the Early FAFSA Initiative. This will give families a full financial aid picture and more time to compare and choose a college. Additional information is provided on possible data conflicts and the use of the IRS DRT to help reduce those conflicts.

CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS

An [Electronic Announcement](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 4, 2016: Participation in and Reporting Expenditures for the Work Colleges Program and Changes to the Expenditure Report Form. Information is provided in the announcement on how schools can apply for participation in the Work Colleges Program, which is part of the Federal Work Study Program, for the 2016-2017 award year. Also included, are instructions for reporting Work Colleges Program Expenditures for the 2015-2016

award year. Deadlines and contact information are available in the announcement, along with copies of instructions and forms that are attached.

The USDE posted an update on an [Electronic Announcement](#) originally published Jan. 20, 2016: Tentative 2016-2017 Funding Levels for the Campus-Based Programs. The attachment for the [Expected Family Contribution Procedures 2016-2017](#) was updated Feb. 4, 2016, to correct erroneous Income Categories for Independent Students.

An [Electronic Announcement](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 9, 2016: 2014-2015 Campus-Based Awards Closeout. The 2014-2015 awards closeout process for the Campus-Based programs is provided along with information regarding the notification process. Other topics discussed in the electronic announcement cover the following:

- Adjusting an Incorrect 2014-2015 FISAP Expenditure Report
- Closeout Amount in G5 and on G5 Reports
- Closeout Amounts Determination Process
- Notification of Award Decrease



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The USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#) Feb. 11, 2016: New Address Information for ECSI Federal Perkins Loan Servicer Effective Feb. 2016. The mailing address information for ECSI Federal Perkins Loan Servicer has been updated. The new address for general correspondence is:

U.S. Department of Education
ECSI Federal Perkins Loan Servicer
P.O. Box 1079
Wexford, PA 15090

The new address for sending Federal Perkins Loan assignment documentation and Perkins

Loan Assignment System User Access Forms to the USDE by overnight or private courier is:

ECSI Federal Perkins Loan Servicer
100 Global View Drive, Suite 800
Warrendale, PA 15086

The address for borrower payments has not changed.

Dear Colleague Letter [GEN-16-05](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 17, 2016: Extension of the Federal Perkins Loan Program. The Federal Perkins Loan Program Extension Act of 2015 was enacted on Dec. 18, 2015, extending the Perkins Loan Program through Sep. 30, 2017. This DCL provides a general overview on school's authority to make loans through the Perkins Loan Program. Grandfathering provisions outlined in DCL GEN-15-03 have been eliminated and new eligibility requirements for undergraduate and graduate students have been established. New disclosure requirements are also explained.

An [Electronic Announcement](#) previously published Sep. 21, 2015 was updated by the USDE Feb. 19, 2016: Perkins Loan Assignment System-System Availability and User Access Process. The USDE has replaced the "Perkins Loan Assignment System User Access Process" attachment



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with an updated version. The new attachment has updated mailing address information for returning PLAS User Access forms.

TECHNICAL

On Feb. 5, 2016, the USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#): 2016-2017 Application Processing System Specifications for Software Developers (Jan. 2016 Final). The announcement outlines changes made to the specifications, which are now available on the FSA Download website at <https://fsadownload.ed.gov>.

[NSLDS Newsletter #51](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 17, 2016: Enhancements to NSLDS Cohort Default Rate Reports and Enrollment Reporting. Information on new Cohort Default Rate reports and enhancements to the NSLDS enrollment reporting process are included with an explanation of the enhancements to NSLDS and the NSLDS Professional Access Website. An updated [NSLDS School Cohort Default Rate History Report \(DRC035\)](#) [Comma Separated Values](#) was also posted Feb. 17, 2016 in a separate notice.

DIRECT LOAN PROGRAM

An [Electronic Announcement](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 5, 2016: Direct Loan

Closeout Information for 2014-2015 Program Year. The announcement provides important reminders and outlines institutional responsibilities related to Direct Loan closeout for the 2014-2015 program year. To be considered successfully closed out, an institution must-

- Have an Ending Cash Balance of \$0 and Total Net Unbooked Disbursements of \$0 internally, and as reflected on the School Account Statement, and
- Complete the Balance Confirmation on the COD website.

The deadline for the Direct Loan closeout for the 2014-2015 program year is Friday, July 29, 2016. For more information regarding the Direct Loan closeout process, review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) attached to the electronic announcement.

TRAINING

Dear Colleague Letter [ANN-16-03](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 8, 2016: Training Workshops – Regional Drive-In Workshop Series. A series of in-person training workshops are being held in each of the regional offices and in Washington, DC. Each interactive one-day session will focus on a single topic in the morning, followed



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by a federal update in the afternoon. The topics offered include:

- Consumer disclosure requirements
- R2T4 Clock Hour Basics
- R2T4 Credit Hour Basics
- R2T4 Term-Based Credit Hour with Modules
- Verification

Training sessions are designed for financial aid and business office staff who are familiar with administering Title IV federal student aid programs. Instructions for registering for the training are given in the announcement. [Locations and dates](#) for the Regional Drive-In Workshop Series are attached to the announcement.

Two Dear Colleague Letters were published by the USDE Feb. 18, 2016:

- [ANN-16-04](#) Webinar Recording – Cash Management Regulations
- [ANN-16-05](#) Webinar Recording – Verification and Unusual Enrollment History

Recordings, PowerPoint Presentations and transcripts for these sessions are available on the IFAP website at the links provided in the DCLs.

FSA STUDENT LOAN OMBUDSMAN

Dear Colleague Letter [GEN-16-04](#) was published by the USDE Feb. 11, 2016: Contact Information for the FSA Student Loan Ombudsman. Updated contact information has been provided for the Federal Student Aid Student Loan Ombudsman as follows:

Online assistance:

<http://studentaid.gov/repay-loans/disputes/prepare>

Telephone: 877-557-2575

Fax: 606-396-4821

Mail: FSA Ombudsman Group
P.O. Box 1843
Monticello, KY 42633

PROGRAM INTEGRITY

The USDE published an [Electronic Announcement](#) Feb. 26, 2016: Program Integrity Questions and Answers Website Update. New and revised questions and answers have been posted to the verification portion and high school diploma portion of this Program Integrity Question and Answer website. The Program Integrity Information website can be viewed at the following link: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hea/rulemaking/2009/integrity-qa.html>.