



Contact:

Sarah Earle
Assistant Vice President, Communications
Granite Edvance
603-406-0596
searle@graniteedvance.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 2, 2024

New FAFSA, new completion mandate, expected to increase college access;
Granite Edvance supporting families in navigating the new form

Concord, NH – The new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), released Dec. 31, contains [several key changes](#) to the student aid formula and application process for current and prospective college students. The release of the new form coincides with a new state law, in effect this school year, requiring high school seniors to complete the FAFSA or sign a waiver opting out in order to graduate. Both initiatives are designed to increase FAFSA completion and in turn increase college access, but the changes mean students may need extra support this year in completing critical requirements.

Key changes to the FAFSA include a simplified form, with about 36 questions instead of the previous 108, and significant revisions to the aid formula. Under the new formula, the number of NH students eligible for a Federal Pell Grant will increase by more than 12,000 next year, according to [data released last month](#) by the U.S. Department of Education. The Department of Education also estimates that of all NH students eligible for a Pell Grant, the number eligible for the Maximum Pell Grant will increase by 24,000. (The Maximum Pell Grant for 2023-24 is \$7,395; the 2024-25 amount has not yet been released.)

Along with the simplified form, the new state law could increase completion rates for eligible students, boosting the number of students who take advantage of aid. According to the National College Attainment Network, FAFSA [completion rates have increased](#) in other states that have adopted FAFSA completion mandates.

But the two initiatives are also creating some challenges for students and those who assist them with their future planning. The FAFSA, which typically opens October 1 each year, is currently in a “soft launch” period, during which it will be available for short periods of time while the Department of Education monitors site performance and form functionality. Visit the [Federal Student Aid website](#) for more information.

The delayed release of the form has [impacted early admissions season](#) for both students and college admissions staff. And while the form overall has been streamlined, some of the changes may pose complications. Applicants will now need to create a studentaid.gov account 3-5 days before they can file the FAFSA, and students and parents will need to complete their own sections of the form individually.

Additionally, the way aid is calculated will look considerably different to applicants familiar with the old form. Students whose parents are separated or divorced will have new guidelines for determining which parent needs to provide information on the form. The changes, along with the anticipated increase in applications, [mean more students and families are likely to need support this year](#).

With the form now live, Granite Edvance, a statewide nonprofit that helps NH students navigate their education and career pathways, is working closely with students and families to assist and troubleshoot, while reassuring them they still have ample time to complete the application. After undergoing extensive training to prepare for the new FAFSA, Granite Edvance's education and career counselors are offering free direct support to students, families, and educators, through both in-person and online services and resources. Students and families can sign up for one-on-one FAFSA-filing appointments [here](#) or attend one of the upcoming regional FAFSA filing events [here](#). Helpful resources including a [FAFSA toolkit](#) for educators are available on the Granite Edvance [website](#).

"The FAFSA opens doors for many students," said Granite Edvance CEO and President Christiana Thornton. "The federal enhancements to the FAFSA are expected to benefit thousands more NH families, making college and other postsecondary options such as trade school more accessible for many students who may have thought it was out of reach. We know, however, that the financial aid process can be intimidating and overwhelming and that the changes to the FAFSA may be causing additional anxiety. We want families to know we're here to support them every step of the way."

About Granite Edvance

Granite Edvance (formerly the New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation, or the NHHEAF Network) supports New Hampshire students and their families through free career and higher-education counseling and resources, as well as funding assistance including scholarships and a private student loan. As a 501 (c) (3), Granite Edvance reinvests its earnings into the state as part of a strong and growing commitment to NH students of all ages and backgrounds. Established in 1962, the organization rebranded as Granite Edvance in November 2023.

For more information, visit [GraniteEdvance.org](#). To schedule an interview, contact Sarah Earle at 603-406-0596 or email searle@graniteedvance.org.

Helpful Resources from Granite Edvance

- PDF: [Granite Edvance FAFSA Toolkit for Educators](#)
- Video: [How to Create your Student Aid Account](#)
- PDF: [Granite Edvance Financial Aid Insider](#)
- Video: [Financial Aid 101 webinar](#)
- [FAFSA web page](#)