



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The First Step to Financial Aid? File the FAFSA** *Iowans left \$22.5 million in federal grant money unclaimed*

**Des Moines, IA, February 20, 2015** – For students planning to attend college in the fall, the time to fill out the FAFSA is now! According to a [recent study](#), Iowa high school graduates left approximately \$22.5 million in federal grant money unused in 2013 simply by not completing the FAFSA.

“We would like to see every high school senior in Iowa file a FAFSA to ensure they take advantage of all financial aid programs for college,” stated Karen Misjak, executive director of the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid). “Filing the FAFSA is a key component to increasing educational attainment in the state. [Research](#) indicates that 90 percent of students who file the FAFSA enroll in postsecondary education,” explained Misjak. “Most families are eligible for some form of financial aid, but they need to apply early to meet the deadlines associated with different programs. Several Iowa colleges have financial aid filing deadlines in March.”

In addition to filing the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov), students should also complete the Iowa Financial Aid Application. Completing these two forms will ensure students take advantage of the federal, state, and, in some cases, institutional aid for which they are eligible. Students can easily link directly to the Iowa Financial Aid Application from their FAFSA confirmation page.

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The FAFSA must be completed every year, so returning college students need to make sure to file the form by their college's financial aid filing deadline. Some of the changes to the 2015-16 FAFSA include enhanced communication to foster youth and clarified definitions of who is considered to be a parent and what it means to be separated parents. "More examples have been added to the FAFSA to help clarify who is considered to be a legal parent," said Misjak. "Additionally, widowed stepparents have been added to the list of persons who are not considered parents unless they have legally adopted the student."

Families who have questions about applying for financial aid can contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456. In addition, more information on products and services that help Iowa families plan, prepare and pay for college is available at Iowa College Aid's website, [www.IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://www.IowaCollegeAid.gov).

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***About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission***

*Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$70.0 million annually, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR-UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being utilized to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at [www.IowaCollegeAid.gov](http://www.IowaCollegeAid.gov).*