

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

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REPORT ON EARLY FAFSA APPLICATIONS

Prepared for Commission Meeting

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Beginning with the 2017-2018 processing year, the FAFSA became available for students to complete three months earlier than in previous years. Instead of waiting until January 1st of the award year, students and families were able to begin completing the FAFSA on October 1, 2016, due to the implementation of prior-prior year tax information requirements.

In preparation for early FAFSA results, the Tuition Grants Commission accelerated the annual update of our internal database and began processing 2017-2018 FAFSA applications in early October 2016.

The following information is available based on FAFSA data retrieved during the first three months of availability (October 2016-December 2016):

- 76,195 South Carolina residents completed a FAFSA during the first three months of the cycle; these are all students who, prior to the change, would not have been able to file before January 1, 2017
- Of those applications, 11,578 listed a participating SC private college as one of their college choices on the FAFSA

By the end of February 2017, the number of applications for all SC residents jumped to 139,526. Nearly 18,000 of those transactions include a SCTG-eligible institution. During previous processing years, the Commission did not receive that amount of applications until mid-May.

The Commission will continue to track the data and compare it to previous years filing statistics; however, the true effect of early FAFSA filing will not be known until after our June 30 processing deadline, and we will not know the final impact on recipient numbers until the end of the Fall 2017 semester.