

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

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FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND FAFSA UPDATE

Prepared for Commission Meeting

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On April 25, 2017, the Federal Department of Education announced that it was abandoning its plans to provide FAFSA school list order to state grant agencies in a randomized order, or by federal school code order. Instead, the Department will continue to provide FAFSA data to agencies, including the colleges listed in the order indicated by the student when completing the FAFSA. The National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) sent a letter to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and United States Senator Lamar Alexander to express gratitude for this decision, on behalf of South Carolina and over a dozen other states that rely on school list order in administering their programs. The Tuition Grants Commission, along with all other state grant agencies, will continue to be prohibited from releasing information to colleges about students' listing of college choices on the FAFSA.

As a result of early FAFSA availability, the Commission has continued to note an increase in overall FAFSAs received as compared to previous years. As of May 23, the Commission had processed 24,619 tentative awards. This number is roughly equivalent to the number of tentative awards processed through June 28 last year. The Commission staff will have a better idea of the impact of early FAFSAs on Tuition Grant applications after the June 30 deadline, but will not know the final impact on recipient numbers until after the 2017 Fall Enrollment Reports are processed sometime in November.