

Student Financial Aid Webinar Questions & Answers

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Questions & Answers:

Q. Since there are so many students whose parents may be unemployed for the long term and their financial aid is based on two years' prior income, how do we reassure them they can afford to attend? How would you direct families if their financial situation has changed due to COVID-19?

A. This process will vary by school, but financial aid administrators have always had at their discretion the use of professional judgment to handle unusual family financial situations. Now, more than ever, with the COVID-19 pandemic you can expect that schools will be working with families who have been impacted by this virus. Some schools may have a different procedure than their normal process for professional judgment appeals that may be COVID-19 specific. Other schools aren't using a different procedure than they normally would for financial aid appeals. There is a new free product that has been vetted by financial aid administrators across the country called "SwiftStudent" (<https://formswift.com/swift-student>). It walks a student through writing and submitting an appeal, as well as discussing what kinds of documentation may be needed. The most important thing is that

students and their families should reach out to the financial office to express their concern about their financial situation to find out what kind of documentation they may need to provide. There may be additional resources available for the family in the form of loans, grants, work study, or institutional funds depending on the school. Financial aid offices will be very empathic and compassionate in helping students on needs that are related to this virus.

One thing that sometimes gets a bit lost in the shuffle is the need for students and families to have filled out the FAFSA first. That's really the first step. Before a student can file an appeal, they would need to have a FAFSA on file. Students need to realize, however, that filing an appeal doesn't automatically mean they are going to receive more funding, but they will never know until they go through the process.

Q. With the ACT adding super scoring, are Kansas universities and colleges considering using super scoring for scholarships or will this be an available option for our students?

A. This response varies among schools. There is a concern among colleges and universities, as well as high schools, about when the test dates are going to be offered. The University of Kansas is going to be using super scoring beginning in the fall of 2021 for the rising seniors. Kansas State University is still working on putting the criteria together for this but are looking at the incoming 2022 freshman class. Southwestern College is considering test optional admissions for this year and will consider super scoring in the future. Students will need to check with the different colleges and universities on how they will utilize superscoring for admission and scholarship purposes.

Q. If a student decides not to enroll this fall as a graduating senior but decides to enroll next fall, would they still be considered a typical incoming freshman and potentially qualify for incoming freshman scholarships?

A. Most schools would consider a student a freshman, even if they take a gap year as long as they haven't taken classes at another institution. The key is whether the student continues to be a true freshman. If they are taking some part-time coursework and the accumulation of those hours make them a transfer student, they would be considered a transfer student. However, if they are taking a true gap year, they would be considered a freshman.

It is possible that students may be considered for a different set of scholarships rather than what would have been in place for 2020. Pratt Community College has some scholarships that do have time limits – two years from the day that they've graduated from high school. Wichita State University has some scholarships that are restricted to high school students, and competition for those are limited to students while in high school and if a student takes a gap year, they would go through an appeal process to be considered a true freshman. The best thing to do is for the student to reach out to the school to find out what their policy will be for students who have received scholarships and have decided not to enroll this fall.

Q. Sometimes institutions that offer online courses will have a higher tuition fee than the face-to-face courses. If schools offer online classes, or a combination of online and face-to-face classes, in the fall will there be additional fees associated with these online courses that wouldn't be applied to face-to-face courses?

A. It is a little early for schools to know the answer to this question right now. Generally, there is an additional expense for online classes; however, most schools waived this expense during the spring

semester and will plan to do so for the summer session as well. Most schools will plan to mitigate costs to ensure that their students will be able to continue toward the completion of their degree program. Students will want to pay attention to either the school's website or social media for the answer to this question.

Q. Many scholarship funds are not awarded until students officially enroll. Some students are concerned about some (if not all) institutions not holding face-to-face classes in the fall and would like to wait to enroll until more information regarding the status of classes is available. What advice do you have for students and families who are relying on these scholarship funds but are concerned about the uncertainties of course delivery?

A. For all admitted students and parents, just hold tight. Many colleges and universities do not know quite yet what the fall will look like although they are certainly hoping to be back on campus. That is the goal. The answer to this question is going to be different at every college and university; there isn't a blanket answer about what those scholarships are going to look like. If the institutions move online, the questions regarding scholarships will be addressed at the time that announcement is made. Students should keep in touch with their schools regarding what the school's policy will be.

Q. Will schools have any potential scholarship opportunities for those students who originally planned to go to school out-of-state but now for financial reasons are considering an in-state school?

A. That is a very good question because one of the critical things about this virus is the effect on family circumstances with the possibility of unemployment and significant disruption in their current financial situation. Some schools will still have scholarship funding available as their foundations have identified additional funding to try to help students and their families mitigate this reality that is going to come with concerns about being able to fund their education. The best thing to do is to contact the financial aid office at the school that the student is wanting to attend to find out what their options might be.

Q. Are there still scholarship opportunities available currently for students?

A. Most schools have extended their scholarship deadlines and have added additional scholarship funding because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Contact specific schools for more information.

Q. Is there a timeline or date that colleges will make the call as to whether classes will be online, face-to-face, or some combination this fall?

A. This is difficult to answer right now as no one really knows the how the spread of the virus will continue. The best thing to do is to follow the school's website and social media where this information will be available as soon as a decision has been made.

Q. If a student is on an athletic scholarship and the season is cancelled, is it possible the athletic scholarship will still be able to be utilized. Some students who are going to school on athletic scholarships, particularly at a community college, don't complete the FAFSA because they didn't need aid due to the scholarships they were awarded.

A. The best thing to do would be to contact the athletic representative at the school as they would be most aware of the eligibility compliance rules. Some schools will continue to honor the athletic scholarship even if the school has cancelled the season, but it is best to check with the school.

Q. If a student is just below a cut-off score for the next level of scholarships and were planning to re-take the June ACT test, what happens if they no longer have that option?

A. Many of the schools have made some adjustments to their requirements and are awarding based on GPA. However, the best advice would be to contact the financial aid office at the school to find out what their policy would be on this issue.

Q. If a high school senior has 30 dual credit hours prior to graduating from high school, and take a summer class at a community college, and now have 33 credit hours does that make them a transfer student although 30 of the hours were taken in high school?

A. That is probably best answered by the school's admissions office.

Q. Is there an all-inclusive list of financial aid office contact information for Kansas institutions instead of having to look at each school's website?

A. Yes, here are two places where you can find this information:

https://kasfaa.org/financial_aid_costs_tuitio.php

https://www.kansasregents.org/students/student_financial_aid/financial_aid_offices