

# STUDENTS RESPOND TO NEW FAFSA

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The U.S. Department of Education released the 2024-2025 version of the Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA). The shorter form of 36 questions was launched to a limited number of people on Dec. 30, 2023.

According to a press release by the U.S. Department of Education, this soft launch was a trial period to measure the website's success and functionality.

Now that the form is widely available, Fresno City College students are being proactive about seeing if they can qualify for financial aid.

However, some are left with little options even with the FAFSA form being simplified.

Leslie, who asked to only be identified by her first name because of her family's immigration status, is a student in the Dental Hygiene program. She was denied financial aid after filing for the 2024-2025 school year. Her parents are immigrants so they used the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) instead of a social security number.

"I guess people with immigrant parents are already having problems with FAFSA, it's like this whole thing going on right now," Leslie said.

Her parents were "told to wait" when they had questions about how to properly fill out the form without having a social security number.

Leslie thinks another factor in her getting declined aid was that her parents are separated but still file jointly for tax purposes. She was told that they were not able to do that in this new cycle.

She has tried to complete it since the new

form was released in December.

Leslie said she and her family tried to "hold off" for as long as they could until their questions could be answered but she decided to just pay the costs to avoid further stress.

She is also one of the students impacted by the change in the new form, which does not consider siblings who are also in college, as a factor in calculating aid.

"It's affecting me, my sister, and basically everyone else," she said.

Leslie said she had accepted her circumstances but has six other siblings who will be attending college, two of which have already been declined financial aid when they applied, recently.

"It's just weird, I don't know how people with immigrant families are supposed to do it, because it just comes down to the social security number," Leslie said.

The dental hygiene student recognizes other FCC students who may be in similar situations. "They are not the only ones financially struggling," she said. "It sucks right now."

But many are praising the FAFSA Simplification Act because more low income students will now be eligible for Pell Grants.

The U.S. Department of Education website predicts 1.5 million additional students will be eligible to receive the Pell Grants for the upcoming school year.

This will also include students who were or are currently incarcerated.



Financial Aid Specialist Israel Kinlow assists Alexander Muniz with questions. Photo/ Devin Taing

Another major change is how a student's financial aid package is developed.

FAFSA will now be calculated with the Student Aid Index (SAI), and the information used can be found directly in tax documents through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Which can also be used, to determine Pell Grant eligibility if applicable.

Additionally, if a student is married, their spouse and their respective in law's can also be considered financial contributors, now.

FCC's financial aid office is located on the upper floor of the Student Services building and is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There are other faculties on campus who are also adapting to the new changes in FAFSA, to better support students such as the Dream Act Center. It has been communicated that their office will be having an informational meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 31.

# CLASSROOMS FORGOT THEIR UMBRELLA ON RAINY DAY

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The lower level of Fresno City College's Math, Science, and Engineering Building was closed due to flooding on Jan. 22. Several rooms have been closed for six to eight weeks according to Vice President of Administrative Services Omar Gutierrez.

Lab room S-20 was the most flooded alongside three offices and a server room next to it. Another two classrooms and faculty offices were partially affected by the flood, according to Gutierrez.



The affected areas of the flooding are mostly dry but remained quarantined as of Feb. 2. Photo/ Devin Taing.

Carol Curtis, a math instructor at FCC, said she was fortunate enough that this time her office wasn't flooded. But one of her classrooms was closed due to flooding.

"It is not the first time we [fellow faculty members] have experienced flooding on the courtyard level of the science building," Curtis said.

Curtis was originally placed in a classroom that was too small for her class.

Jessica Nijjar, a student in Curtis's class and a Pre-Allied Health major, said by the next time their class met, they were relocated to a classroom bigger than they needed.

"Before in that small class everything just felt really tight and just like suffocating with not a lot of room to scoot in. Now you have your own little space," said Nijjar.

Rainwater entered through a pipe and began leaking out into the lower courtyard. This follows a trend of flooding into the lower levels of the MSE building according to Gutierrez.

"We didn't know that piping was going to be active, so did our contractor. We didn't see that connection," Gutierrez said.

Repairs and renovations regarding a damaged wall had already been underway when the rain

arrived due to the previous problems with water leaking into rooms of the building.

Gutierrez states that the flood had been contained to a concentrated area before it could become worse.

An email sent out by President Robert Pimintel on the day of the flooding indicated that the affected faculty would work with the Dean of Math, Science and Engineering Shirley McManus to find new offices and classrooms to move in while repairs occurred.

"Thankfully, our division dean, Shirley McManus, was extremely diligent about finding classrooms for all of the classes that had to be relocated," Curtis said.

Nijjar struggled to find the first classroom they were relocated to since it was back by the tennis courts. Then they moved again, and she attempted to locate her new class for the next eight weeks.

"At the beginning, I was kind of annoyed because we had to move classes several times," Nijjar said.

Gutierrez concluded that he was generally satisfied with the response to the situation. He felt the staff had a timely response to drain the flooded areas while administrators successfully relocated faculty and their students.