

**THE WHITE HOUSE**

**WASHINGTON**

November 9, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley  
Governor of South Carolina  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

I know that you believe as strongly as I do that a good education and job training are among the surest pathways to the middle class and a key driver of our American resurgence. With college more important -- and also more expensive -- than ever, we need to work together to support our students as they make the important decisions to pursue a post-secondary degree or credential and to choose the college that is right for them. Yet, about 2 million students still fail to claim the education aid for which they are eligible.

That is why I recently announced that beginning next year, families will be able to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as the FAFSA, even earlier -- starting October 1st, around the time college applications ramp up. Students filling out the FAFSA will also be able to electronically retrieve tax information filed for an earlier year, rather than waiting until tax season to complete their applications. They will know how much Federal aid they qualify for sooner, giving them more time to evaluate their options. And we're working with colleges, universities, and scholarship programs to align their application and financial aid processes with the new FAFSA start date, so students can review their full financial aid packages earlier. All in all, we think these steps will help millions of students better plan for and pay for college.

The Federal Government provides access to over \$150 billion in grants, loans, and work-study funds each year to support millions of young people and adults as they pursue their higher education dreams. The first step in qualifying for that aid -- and for determining what financial support might be available from States and from private scholarships -- is the completion of the FAFSA. Because students and parents now have the option to complete the form online and to retrieve their tax information with the click of a mouse, the time it takes to complete the application has been cut by two-thirds to 20 minutes.

I invite your support to help realize the benefit of these changes in the FAFSA for students and families in your State. You can support this effort by coordinating with your State financial aid

agencies and institutions to align student applications and processes for State-based financial aid with these new Federal timelines.

I also invite your participation in the FAFSA Completion Initiative that I launched in March of last year. Already, 32 Governors have joined us to enable the schools in their State to obtain data on FAFSA completion so they can boost FAFSA completion rates and to promote early awareness and readiness for college.

With your leadership, America can again lead the world in college attainment by the end of this decade.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", with a large circular flourish on the left and a horizontal line extending to the right.