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THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

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The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

I am writing on behalf of the more than 344,000 students who attend the 26 colleges and universities that make up the University System of Georgia. Respectfully, I request that you extend the deadline for Gainful Employment and Financial Value Transparency (GE/FVT) reporting to July 1, 2025. In addition, the Department must affirm the exact dates the 2025-2026 FAFSA will be fully functional. Otherwise, the ongoing piecemeal release of the FAFSA and related services/systems is untenable. The Department should carefully consider all that has occurred when finalizing the audit guide for 2024-2025 as well.

By almost all accounts, the launch of the simplified FAFSA can only be categorized as an abject failure. It has had unprecedented levels of ongoing and new issues that will delay aid and negatively impact students and campuses in ways we do not yet fully know. It has stretched our campus financial aid offices to the limit. Staff are working hard to serve as many students as possible including days, nights and weekends – yet, through no fault of their own, it's still not enough.

What upsets me most, however, is the impact this failure is having on thousands of students here in Georgia and across the nation who have done absolutely nothing wrong. We're now at that time of year when students should be ready for fall classes. This year's federal college financial aid process was supposed to be easier. Instead, students trying to go to college, many for the first time, are stuck.

Because so many systems or processes are delayed, work incorrectly, are unreliable or are subject to rules/guidance specification changes, campuses across the nation are relegated to manual workarounds and reprocessing that consume thousands of precious hours beyond what a normal aid year looks like. When evaluating my request, I implore you to consider the following:

- Manual FAFSA corrections only opened July 1 and must be performed one at a time. Your office just announced that batch FAFSA corrections will not be available for 2024-2025 at all. This creates even more labor-intensive work for campuses nationwide. In addition, your office announced that batch corrections will not be available when the 2025-2026 FAFSA opens.
- The GE/FVT reporting requirements are an enormous lift for institutions. One of the largest system vendors in the nation won't have the interface ready until mid-September. This is directly because of

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the lateness of final specifications and last-minute changes/corrections from the Department. The fact that there will be no batch FAFSA corrections capability for 2024-2025 at all exacerbates the burden already placed on campuses. Forcing this arbitrary and unreasonable deadline puts data quality and timeliness of reporting directly in jeopardy.

- The Department has identified thousands of records with conflicting information. This is outside the verification process and must presently be performed manually. Schools are reporting that when taking these corrections into account, the verification selection rates are equal to prior years. In addition, the Department just released additional guidance and requirements about resolving conflicting information/verification. Tens of thousands of FAFSAs have already been processed. What impact will this have on students and schools who have already been processed, corrected and awarded?
- Secondary identity confirmation still cannot be performed via SAVE, although another workaround has been deployed.
- Paper FAFSAs have been collected by the Department since January yet have just started to be processed in early August.

With all of this considered, the Department must extend the GE/FVT reporting deadline or risk massive data quality issues and reporting delays by institutions that simply do not have the resources to complete the task by Oct. 1. Further, we believe the Department must delay the release of the 2025-2026 FAFSA until all component systems and services are fully functional and ready to be delivered. Finally, how will the department possibly create a reasonable audit guide for 2024-2025 year? We implore you to take all of what has happened into consideration when doing so.

To close and to be clear, I commend the actions of Congress to simplify the financial aid process for students. This is a worthy endeavor and one that is long overdue. However, given the issues with the launch, to expect institutions to continue to operate, serve students and families and fulfill their core mission in this environment is unreasonable, unfair and wrong. The Department has asked for patience and understanding from students, families, colleges and universities across the country. It is time for the Department to provide some as well. I appreciate your time and await your response.

Sincerely,



Dr. Sonny Perdue
Chancellor, the University System of Georgia