



## Membership

March 10, 2017

### FAFSA IRS DRT Down “Weeks”; What to Do Now

Late yesterday, the U.S. Department of Education and the IRS **confirmed** that the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) will be down for several weeks with no known return date. They cited concerns that FAFSA filers using the tool may be subject to identify fraud. The announcements section of the **FAFSA website** now announces the outage.

We'd like to extend a tremendous “thank you” to the many NCAN members who reached out to their members of Congress early this week. **College Forward** was among several groups to reach out to Rep. Lloyd Doggett, spurring him to **write a letter** to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. **Denver Scholarship Foundation** and the **Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis** both were successful at engaging their senators, who tweeted (**here** and **here**) and followed up on the issue.

Looking ahead, we must help students file their FAFSA without the DRT. NCAN recommends our members do the following:

- 1) Assure their students know the FAFSA is still available online. It is important to encourage them to do the FAFSA now and not wait for the return of the DRT, which could be unavailable for the long-term.
- 2) Communicate early and often that students will need copies of all of their tax return paperwork. They can retrieve this paperwork from a tax preparer or their tax software if they don't have a copy. Those with no access to a copy should request a tax transcript. Also consider whether your state allows tax filers to retrieve copies from state offices, such as the Office of Tax and Revenue in Washington, D.C., which allows students to obtain copies of transcripts with a letter from a parent and their ID.
- 3) Inform students who need to retrieve a tax transcript to do their FAFSA that a transcript can take 10 days to receive in the mail. Many of our low-income families will not qualify for online tax transcript retrieval, which is **outlined here**.
- 4) After their FAFSA is filed, students should request a tax transcript using a 4506-T in preparation for verification of their financial information.

NCAN anticipates increased rates of verification given the lack of availability of pre-verified financial information from the DRT. We join NASFAA in **their call** on the Education Department to:

- 1) Allow signed copies of tax returns from applicants to satisfy verification documentation requirements in place of DRT information or IRS tax transcripts.
- 2) Revise the verification selection criteria to provide a more generous tolerance to ensure that the numbers of students selected for verification remains stable and manageable by institutions so that financial aid processing can continue uninterrupted.

NCAN will continue to update members, sending emails when necessary and putting new information, if any, on the

**NCAN blog.** Also, you can follow the play-by-play on Twitter - [@collegeaccess](#).

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