



TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

P.O. Box 12788 Austin, Texas 78711

March 13, 2017

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OF HIGHER EDUCATION

512/ 427-6101
Fax 512/ 427-6127

Web site:
<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>

TO: Chancellors and Presidents of Public and Independent Institutions of
Higher Education in Texas

FROM: Raymund A. Paredes *RAP*

RE: Guidance Regarding the FAFSA Priority Deadline

The Coordinating Board is aware of the challenges that many students are facing due to their inability to utilize the IRS Data Retrieval Tool in completing their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Given the statewide priority deadline of March 15, we have received inquiries as to the impact that this will have on the priority status assigned to students whose applications may be delayed due to the problems with the FAFSA process. The agency utilized the Financial Aid Advisory Committee membership in order to consult with numerous institutions in developing an appropriate course of action.

The state financial aid priority deadline is addressed in [Texas Education Code Section 56.008](#) and is administered through [Texas Administrative Code Rule 21.10](#). Specifically, Rule 21.10(a) indicates that "all general academic teaching institutions shall use March 15 as their priority application deadline for applications for state financial assistance for the following year." While the deadline is mandated for general academic teaching institutions, all institutions of higher education are encouraged to utilize the priority process. Rule 21.10(b) goes on to state that "the priority deadline is not to serve as a determination of eligibility for state financial assistance, but otherwise eligible students who apply on or before the deadline shall be given priority consideration for available state financial assistance before other applicants."

The Coordinating Board would like to clarify that the determination as to whether a student meets the March 15 statewide deadline is made by the individual institution. Furthermore, and particularly given the current FAFSA situation, the March 15 priority deadline does not prevent an institution from choosing to extend priority to an additional group of students who meet an institutionally set deadline that occurs after March 15. Given the challenges being faced by students due to the problems with the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, we encourage institutions to determine a course of action that is in the best interest of their students.

If you have any questions, please contact Financial Aid Services at (844) 792-2640 or Grantinfo@thecb.state.tx.us.

cc: Directors of Financial Aid
Ken Martin, Assistant Commissioner
Charles Puls, Deputy Assistant Commissioner
DeChà Reid, Director, Financial Aid Services