Federal Student Aid (FSA) has started a “soft launch” of the 2024-25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). FSA explained the following in a December 31, 2023 message to schools. After reviewing the information below, you can go to www.studentaid.gov to complete your 2024-25 FAFSA, keeping mind JMU’s priority filing date is March 1, 2024.

Message from FSA:

The Department has started the soft launch of the 2024-25 FAFSA form, where the form will be available for periods of time over the coming days while we monitor site performance and respond in real time to any potential issues impacting the applicant experience. During the soft launch we will be initiating pauses to the site, during which time the form will not be available while our team makes improvements. As explained below, students and families will have ample time to complete the 2024-25 FAFSA, and do not need to rush to fill out the form immediately when the soft launch period opens.

Leading up to and during the soft launch, we uncovered some minor issues affecting users at various points in the application process, which is to be expected with the launch of a major new website. We are addressing these issues concurrently and will continue to monitor for additional issues users may encounter while we conduct the soft launch.

What to Expect During the Soft Launch of the 2024-25 FAFSA Form

During the soft launch period, the Department will be monitoring site performance, conducting planned pauses for maintenance, and making updates to improve the user experience for students and families.

Students and families will have ample time to complete the 2024-25 FAFSA, and do not need to rush to fill out the form immediately when the soft launch period opens, as FSA will not transmit results to schools until later in January. Here is what students, families, and schools can expect during the soft launch:

• Contributors (the student, parent, student’s spouse, or parent’s spouse), including those without a Social Security number (SSN), will be able to create a StudentAid.gov account to access and complete the online FAFSA form. Contributors who already have a verified account username and password will use their existing credentials to sign in and access the form.

• FSA will initiate pauses for site maintenance and to make updates as needed to create a better FAFSA experience for students and families. Users who go on-line during a temporary pause should check back at a later time to complete the form.

• Applicants may experience a waiting room feature, which will help control website volumes to ensure optimal performance of the form.

• If a student completes their form during the soft launch period, their information will be stored for processing. They do NOT need to return to resubmit their application after the soft launch concludes.

• If a student completes their FAFSA form, but a contributor cannot access the site during a period when the site is unavailable, the contributor can return to complete their portion of the form as soon as the site becomes available again. Any data entered in the form is still in the system and is secure.
If FSA initiates site maintenance while a student or contributor is completing an application, their data is securely saved in the system as they progress through the application.

After all sections of the online FAFSA form are completed and submitted, the student will receive a confirmation email noting their submission date, their estimated Student Aid Index (SAI), and estimated Federal Pell Grant eligibility. However, the student will not receive a FAFSA Submission Summary until FSA processes the FAFSA, beginning in late January.

What This Means for Students and Families
Because full processing of FAFSA forms will not start until late January, students and families will have ample time to complete the 2024-25 FAFSA and do not need to rush to fill out the form immediately when the soft launch period opens.

FSA is updating its messaging to students and their families on StudentAid.gov and in other external communications to explain:

- The schools they selected will receive their FAFSA eligibility information starting in late January. Students will receive an email informing them when that information has been sent to the schools.

- Students will receive an email when their FAFSA Submission Summary is available to review on StudentAid.gov.

- Students should begin to receive aid information from schools they have been accepted to several weeks after the school received their FAFSA information.