

FAFSA Messaging: Guiding Principles

Informational

Messaging that presents FAFSA as an informational tool are favored and elicit relief, a sense of control and curiosity.

Transparent




Families want “up front” information, even if it is bad news, so they can effectively manage costs. They do not want surprises down the road.

Specific

Families are weary of statements that lack specificity, especially with regards to quantifiable information such as income, interest rates and timelines.

Objective

Messages that are too sales-oriented or have a promotional tone prompt distrust and suspicion.

 ACTION	 AVOID	 TRY
<p>Position FAFSA as a tool instead of a decision-making entity</p>	<p>FAFSA is the form students and parents need to fill out to get financial aid.</p>	<p>FAFSA gives you information about what aid you qualify for. There is no requirement to take any aid that is offered to you or enroll in a school.</p>
<p>Provide simple explanations for even common terms</p> <p>Where applicable, explicitly convey the money does not have to be paid back</p>	<p>FAFSA gives you access to grants, scholarships, loans and work-study programs to help pay for college.</p>	<p>FAFSA gives you access to grants and scholarships that you do not have to pay back, to work-study programs where you earn money via a part-time job at the school, and a variety of student loans you pay back.</p>
<p>Use numbers to give concrete meaning to not well defined or relative categories</p>	<p>Many colleges offer scholarships and grants for low, middle and even upper middle-income families.</p>	<p>Most families earning less than \$75,000 a year can receive a scholarship to apply towards any community college or public university in the state.</p>
<p>Keep statements factual and informative, not promotional, to help break through pervasive skepticism</p>	<p>FAFSA is a risk-free way to explore financial aid opportunities without promising to pay anything.</p>	<p>FAFSA gives you information about what aid you qualify for. There is no requirement to take any aid that is offered to you or enroll in a school.</p>