



FAFSA on the Web Release 6.0

Marketing Initiatives



Objective and Scope

This Marketing Initiatives document accompanies the Marketing Approach for FAFSA on the Web Release 6.0. The purpose of this document is to describe potential marketing initiatives SFA may choose to implement to increase usage of the FAFSA on the Web site. The “high priority” initiatives were selected for inclusion in the Marketing Approach for the FAFSA on the Web Release 6.0 based on the anticipated effect each initiative is expected to create, as well as the ability to begin each initiative well before its due date. Imbedded in the description of the initiatives is the purpose of the activity and what is involved in implementing each initiative. The estimated time frame to implement the initiative is listed along with the approximate cost. The target audience listed is the primary group who is expected to be most influenced by the initiative. Any initiatives that require efforts from outside vendors include applicable contact information. In addition, “low priority” initiatives are included. These initiatives were not selected as part of the marketing strategy for release 6.0 because of high cost, low reach to the target audience, or lack of time and resources. These ideas are valuable and could be effectively implemented given the appropriate resources.



High Priority Initiatives

The following initiatives are considered high priority initiatives. These efforts were selected as such because they are a strong balance of value, impact and reach. They are designed to reach and influence the behavior of the target audiences.

I. Community Announcement

Develop a community announcement through the SFA Communications department reminding applicants that now is the time to file, and describing enhancements to the site, with the intention of having it picked up by major publications and columnists. Provide a contact for each audience so that further information can be obtained if necessary. Develop an informational flyer/pamphlet that can be distributed to reporters and others who call for information about FAFSA on the Web. Ensure that the flyer can be e-mailed or faxed so that people can easily have interesting and accurate facts about FAFSA on the Web. The press release will be distributed to reporters, operating partners, financial partners, schools and students.

- Estimated Release Date: End of January 2002
- Approximate Cost: No cost
- Intended to Reach: Parents and Students

II. U.S. News & World Report

Advertise www.fafsa.ed.gov in the *U.S. News & World Report Paying for College* guide. The *U.S. News & World Report* Special Issues produce a jump in newsstand sales and trigger a spike in reader interest among clearly defined segments. This allows SFA to match marketing targets with the editions that attract the selected segment, college students and their parents. In addition, develop an informational flyer/pamphlet that can be distributed to reporters and others who call for information about FAFSA on the Web. Ensure that the flyer can be e-mailed or faxed so that people can easily have interesting and accurate facts about FAFSA on the Web.

- Estimated Publication Date: Mid-September 2001
- Approximate Cost: \$80,000 for a horizontal half page 5-Color ad
- Intended to Reach: Parents and Students
- Vendor Contact Information: *US News & World Report*, 202-955-2052

III. Search Engine Optimization

Endeavor to make www.fafsa.ed.gov appear higher in search engine results (e.g. Yahoo, Google, AltaVista) using the Search Engine Optimization solution available from Beacon Technologies. Beacon will develop a list of target phrases or "keywords" that represent FAFSA on the Web and are most often used by potential customers when searching for financial aid information on the internet. Beacon Technologies will procure a "shadow" domain name, optimize the "shadow" site to ensure that it performs well for these keywords in the search engines, and redirect the "shadow" site to www.fafsa.ed.gov. Once optimized for maximum performance, Beacon will submit the site to all the major directories and engines for inclusion in their site. After submission,



they monitor the site's rankings on a daily basis to not only ensure that www.fafsa.ed.gov has been listed and is ranking well, but also to make sure it stays highly ranked. Beacon takes corrective measures to regain the top positions in the event of any decline in performance.

- Estimated Timeframe to Complete: 3-4 weeks
- Approximate Cost: \$5,000 initial set up fee and \$2,000 per month maintenance
- Intended to Reach: Parents and Students
- Vendor Contact Information: John Scaramuzzo, Beacon Technologies
336-931-1295 x233 or muzzo@beacontec.com

IV. Cinema Ads

In-theater advertising program shown prior to and after every feature presentation seven days a week. Local, regional and national representation available. This tactic is primarily intended to impact college students. There are options of which colleges to target (e.g. colleges with large populations, colleges with low on line filing rates).

- Estimated Timeframe to Complete: 3-4 weeks
- Approximate Cost: \$40,000 for 8 weeks at 30 targeted cinemas
- Intended to Reach: Students
- Vendor Contact Information: Howard Goldberg, 201-684-2600 x311

V. College Newspapers

Place half page advertisements in prominent or targeted college newspapers. Use this vehicle to repeat the key messages: File Now! File online! It's easy, fast and secure.

- Estimated Timeframe to Complete: 2-3 weeks
- Approximate Cost: \$10,000 (\$500 per paper on 20 select campuses)
- Intended to Reach: Students
- Vendor Contact Information: Contact individual schools selected for a media kit

VI. Regional FAA Association Newsletter

Work with the regional Financial Aid Administrator associations to advertise FAFSA on the Web messages in their publications. There are six regional associations affiliated with the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). This is a way to support NASFAA associations while publicizing FAFSA on the Web in well respected and read industry publications.

- Estimated Timeframe to Publish: 3 – 4 months



- Approximate Cost: \$8,000 (\$1,000 per regional organization plus set up/copy fees)
- Intended to Reach: Financial Aid Administrators
- Vendor Contact Information:
 - EASFAA
Kathleen Smith
Education Finance Council
1155 15th Street, NW, Suite 801
Washington, DC 20005
Fax (202) 494-0666
<http://www.easfaa.org/easfaa/index.html>
 - MASFAA
webmaster@masfaaweb.org
 - RMASFAA
leavitt@cc.dixie.edu
 - SASFAA
Julia Perreault
Director, Financial Aid
Emory University
300 B. Jones Center
Atlanta, GA 30322
Phone - (404) 727-0260
jperrea@emory.edu
 - SWASFAA
John Noah
Director of Financial Aid
Lyon College
PO Box 2317
Batesville, AR 72501
Phone: 870-698-4250
Fax: 870-793-1791
Email: jnoah@lyon.edu
 - WASFAA
info@wsfaa.org

VII. E-mail Message

Create an e-mail message, including a link to www.fafsa.ed.gov to remind students about filing electronically. Distribute this message to financial aid offices with a request to forward on to their students. The intent is to make this a simple request to financial aid administrators. This is an easy and effective way for FAAs to share information with their students.



- Estimated Timeframe to Complete: 2 weeks
- Approximate Cost: No cost
- Intended to Reach: Financial Aid Administrators and Students

VIII. Performance Marketing

Performance Marketing is an opportunity to attract affiliates who are willing to put the FAFSA on the Web logo on their web site. In turn, these affiliates would receive a “payment for performance” when they refer a user to www.fafsa.ed.gov.

- Estimated Timeframe to be determined
- Approximate Cost to be determined
- Intended to Reach: Students and Parents
- Vendor Contact Information: www.BeFree.com; US Sales Operations 508-480-4000

IX. Incentives/Rewards

Offer a reward or incentive to online filers. For example, collect the names of applicants who file online and enter the names in a drawing for one or more prizes, such as a gift certificate to the campus bookstore, or a DVD player.

- Estimated Timeframe to be determined
- Approximate Cost to be determined
- Intended to Reach: Students

X. Feedback

Add survey questions as part of the filing process in order to gather feedback from online filers about their opinions of the application and how they heard about the web site. Rewards or incentives could be offered for students who answered the survey questions. This feedback will assist SFA in determining what marketing efforts are most effective.

- Estimated Timeframe: Implement in conjunction with the 6.0 release
- Approximate Cost to be determined
- Intended to Reach: Students



Low Priority Initiatives

The following initiatives are considered a low priority for release 6.0 for one or more reasons. For example, the initiative may have been planned as a one time effort for release 5.0, may involve a high cost or is only expected to reach a small part of the target audience for the effort required. These initiatives are valuable ideas that would be effective if additional resources exist for implementation.

Initiative & Description	High Cost	Low Reach/ Impact	One Time Effort	Comments
<p><i>Best Practices Study</i> Conduct a telephone interview with the top five schools with the highest percentage of on-line filing. Discuss the schools' strategy and tactics for encouraging their students to file on line. Summarize schools' best practices into an informational and promotional format. Share this information with other schools (through direct mail or posted electronically on IFAP) to foster creative ideas for promoting FAFSA on the Web as well as friendly competition between schools.</p>			X	<p>It was assumed that this initiative would be completed for release 5.0 and therefore would not need to be replicated for release 6.0. Once completed, it may not be as effective to publish a similar study every year. However, as a low cost marketing tool it could become a yearly effort if the schools with the highest filing rates changed.</p>
<p><i>Post Office Posters</i> Distribute FAFSA on the Web posters to Post Offices around the country with a letter requesting that the poster be hung in the main post office lobby. It is intended that patrons of the post office will be reminded of filing the FAFSA when they visit the post office for mailing needs as well as to pick up tax forms.</p>			X	<p>Due to the amount of effort required for set up (e.g. contacting USPS, reproducing and distributing posters) it was assumed that this effort would be completed for release 5.0 and would be a lower priority for release 6.0.</p>



Initiative & Description	High Cost	Low Reach/ Impact	One Time Effort	Comments
<i>Collegeview.com</i> Partner with this college search web site to sponsor their virtual financial aid center. This would allow for full integration using content from the Federal Student Financial Aid Home page and the Student Guide. Collegeview.com receives 75,000 unique visitors per month.	X			Although this initiative requires a high cost, it would most likely reach a large percentage of the target audience.
<i>Spanish PSA</i> Produce a PSA for Spanish speaking audiences and disseminate to Spanish radio stations.		X		This initiative requires high effort for execution and is expected to reach a unique portion of the target audience.
<i>Promotional Video</i> Develop an informational and promotional video for FAFSA on the Web. Distribute the video to schools to be shown at financial aid information sessions. The intent is to make promoting FAFSA on the Web as easy as possible for guidance counselors and financial aid administrators. The video would also be effective at conferences and college fairs.	X			Requires a high cost to produce, but could be reused for several years.
<i>College Bookstore Inserts</i> Partner with major college bookstores to provide shopping bag inserts. The inserts are distributed when students or parents purchase textbooks, apparel and other items at college bookstores. Advertisements are distributed in hundreds of bookstores throughout the country reaching millions of students.	X			A creative and unique idea intended to reach a large majority of the target audience, yet requires a high investment.
<i>College Search Web Sites</i> Contact college search web sites to include links to www.fafsa.ed.gov .			X	After completing this effort for release 5.0, it was determined that the majority of appropriate web sites link to www.fafsa.ed.gov .



Initiative & Description	High Cost	Low Reach/ Impact	One Time Effort	Comments
<i>Public Housing</i> Partner with HUD to target public housing residents.	X	X		This effort would reach a very important, but very limited audience for the cost and effort required for execution.
<i>Press Conference</i> Hold a press conference for a targeted audience and demo the web site.		X		This initiative is not likely to reach a large majority of the target audience.
<i>Retailers</i> Partner with large retailers like WalMart and Target to promote FAFSA on the Web through posters.	X			While a partnership with a major retailer could be mutually beneficial for both parties, it generally takes several years to develop such a relationship. In addition, it would require a large investment to produce materials for the retail locations.
<i>Congressional Newsletters</i> Work with members of Congress to promote FAFSA on the Web in their newsletters.		X		This initiative has been left in the hands of the SFA Communications Department. The majority of members of Congress do not produce a monthly newsletter or other communication vehicle for their constituents. In addition, the audience that would be reached through this initiative is very selective and not necessarily one of the FAFSA on the Web target audiences.