

# **U.S. Education Department Relaxes Financial Aid Process for SWOSU Students**

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The U.S. Education Department recently gave Southwestern Oklahoma State University and other universities flexibility in verifying applications for scholarships, grants and loans while an online tool used to apply for federal student aid is out of commission.

Students and families have been affected by the suspension of the Internal Revenue Service's Data Retrieval Tool—a tool which makes it easier to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The changes will affect the verification requirements for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 FAFSA cycles. Instead of using the tool or requiring a tax transcript, SWOSU may now consider a signed paper copy of the 2015 IRS tax return as acceptable documentation. Institutions will no longer be required to collect documentation obtained from the IRS or other tax authorities to verify that an applicant, an applicant's spouse, or an applicant's parents did not file a 2015 tax return but they are expected to provide the verification that was previously required.

Jerome Wichert, director of student financial services at SWOSU, said the change will make it easier for students to complete the financial aid application and income verification requirements.

It is not known when the IRS tool with added security measures will be back online.

For more information, contact the SWOSU Student Financial Services office at 580.774.3786.