



2026 Federal Student Aid Boot Camp

Thursday, July 23–Friday, July 24

Pew Charitable Trusts, Washington, D.C.

Learning Objectives

- The current costs of college and trends over time
- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Student Aid Index (SAI)
- The Federal Pell Grant Program
- Federal student loans and student loan borrowers
- Student debt
- How debt and default intersect with socioeconomic status, race, type of institution attended, and amount borrowed, and
- The federal student aid repayment programs

Moderators

MaryEllen McGuire

President & Founder, PNPI

Betsy Prueter

Senior Director of Programming & Chief of Staff, PNPI

Thursday, July 23

9:00–10:00 AM ET **Breakfast & Registration**

10:00–11:00 AM ET **Welcome + College Cost Overview**

Speakers: MaryEllen McGuire, Postsecondary National Policy Institute & Eddy Conroy, National College Attainment Network

11:00–11:15 AM ET: **Break**

11:15 AM–12:45 PM ET **Applying for Financial Aid**

Speakers: Nalia Medina & Jill Desjean, National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

This session will explain what the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is and provide participants with an opportunity to participate in a simulation focused on calculating a student's SAI.

12:45–1:30 PM ET: **Lunch**

1:30–2:45 PM ET **Pell & Federal Student Loans**

Speakers: Alexandra Hegji, Congressional Research Service & Katie Berger, Lumina Foundation

This session will provide an overview of the Federal Pell Grant Program and Pell Grant recipients, and review the types of federal student loans that are available and borrower demographics.

2:45–3:00 PM ET: **Break**

3:00–4:15 PM ET **The Legislative Process**

Speakers: MaryEllen McGuire, PNPI & Emmanuel Guillory, American Council on Education

During this session, the legislative process will be presented through the eyes of former congressional staff.

4:15–4:30 PM ET **Wrap Up**

Friday, July 24

9:30–10:00 AM ET **Breakfast & Registration**

10:00–11:30 AM ET **Welcome + Student Loan Debt & Default**

Speaker: Jinann Bitar, The Education Trust & Mark Huelsman, The Hope Center

This panel will provide an overview of student debt, delinquency, and default, including information on borrower debt loads and likelihood of repayment.

11:30–11:45 AM ET: **Break**

11:45 AM–1:15 PM ET **Federal Repayment Programs**

Speakers: Brian Denten, Pew Charitable Trusts

This panel will provide an overview of the current federal student loan repayment plans and give participants an opportunity to interact with the the Department of Education's Loan Simulator.

1:15–2:00 PM ET: **Lunch**

2:00–3:00 PM ET **Policy Roundtable**

Speakers: Amaris Benavidez, U.S. House of Representatives; Catherine Brown, National College Attainment Network (NCAN); & Alex Ricci, National Council of Higher Education Resources

3:00–3:10 PM: **Break**

3:10–3:30 PM ET **Wrap Up & Adjourn**

Speaker: Betsy Prueter, PNPI