

2025-2026 Special Circumstance Appeal Information and Instructions

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes certain life events or changes can occur after submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) which can affect a family's ability to contribute to one's education.

Federal law, as amended of Section 479A of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) and US Department of Education regulations, allow in very limited, extenuating financial circumstances for a student to request a review of the FAFSA data initially required to be reported due to a significant change in household income caused by a qualifying circumstance.

Special Circumstance Appeals are reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis of: a qualifying event, verifiable documentation of the circumstance, and proof of a material change in the family's ability (not willingness) to pay for education expenses. A Special Circumstance review is not a request for additional aid, but is a review of the Needs Analysis and data elements used under federal law to determine the SAI (Student Aid Index) on the original FAFSA; and if it is warranted under law and regulation to change these data elements.

A Special Circumstance appeal requires the following: a qualifying circumstance has occurred which can be documented and verified, proof of change in income is established, a current year FAFSA is submitted and fully processed, student is accepted to an eligible degree program, and enrolled in courses for the term(s) appeal submitted. Anticipated changes to income cannot be reviewed if a qualifying event has not occurred with an established change in income.

The basis of the Special Circumstance review process is established in federal law. To be considered for an appeal, there must be: 1) Qualifying circumstance and, 2) Significant decline (of at least 20% or more) in the applicant's household financial situation, and 3) Material changes in ability to pay for educational expenses. A qualifying circumstance is an **extenuating and involuntary event**, out of the student's or parent's control, resulting in a material decline in the household's financial situation and the ability to pay for education expenses with the aid offered. **If the circumstance does not meet these requirements, it does not qualify for an appeal and should not be submitted as it would result in denial.**

Eligible qualifying circumstances:

- **Involuntary** employment status change resulting in a significant income reduction (**20% or greater**) such as: termination, furlough, dislocated, natural disaster, disability, or similar extenuating event.
- Change in household income (**a reduction of 20% or greater**) due to an extenuating circumstance such as a farming or business loss or closure due to abnormal economic conditions, natural disaster, or similar event.
- Death, separation, divorce of parent(s) or spouse after filing the FAFSA that significantly reduced household income.
- Significant medical, dental, nursing home expenses paid out of pocket (not covered by insurance or reimbursement and must exceed the 11% income protection allowance threshold built into the FAFSA SAI calculation).
- Multiple family members enrolled in Title IV eligible post-secondary education programs where family incurs significant out-of-pocket expense.

Ineligible circumstances that will not be considered:

- Current FAFSA already has an SAI that is the lowest (-1500, 0, or near) score possible where student is eligible for the majority of aid options; or due to minor changes in SAI from one year to the next.
- Normal reductions or fluctuations in income, e.g., overtime pay, commission, bonuses, one-time winnings, etc. (such items are accounted for in tax filing and would be reflected on the following year's FAFSA).
- **Voluntary/willful** changes in employment not caused by a qualifying circumstance, such changes are accounted for in future FAFSA tax year.
- Student or parent unwillingness or refusal to utilize federal student loans options offered to them.
- Parent(s) of undergraduate student refusal or unwillingness to contribute to educational expenses.
- Personal expenses such as credit card debt, car/home purchase or payments, and other lifestyle choices.
- Other expenses not related to the cost of attendance of completing degree/diploma.
- If all costs of attendance for completing degree/diploma are funded by 3rd party e.g., scholarships or sponsorships.

***Not all changes in income qualify for appeal, nor do all adjustments result in additional aid eligibility.**

***Recent changes in income are subject to a waiting period of up to 6 months to verify income reduction requirement.**

***Federal law does not allow the modification of federal methodology formulas or tables used to compute the SAI.**

***Federal law requires conflicting information to be resolved before a Special Circumstance review can take place.**

***All determinations are final, by law, and cannot be appealed to SCC or the US Department of Education.**

General Questions and Answers:

What is the purpose of the Special Circumstance Appeal process?

This process is *not an appeal to directly request more aid*, but rather a federal review process to determine if there are grounds that warrant, under federal law and regulation, making changes to the original FAFSA data due to an eligible extenuating and qualifying circumstance that significantly impacted the ability to pay educational expenses. Submission of an appeal is not a guarantee of additional aid eligibility. Requests reporting an unwillingness to use the aid eligibility options officially offered by the FAFSA will not be approved. Normal fluctuations in income not resulting from a qualifying circumstance would be accounted for in the next FAFSA year cycle tax base year and not considered as a Special Circumstance. If conditions or complete documentation cannot be provided, an appeal should not be filed.

When can a Special Circumstance appeal be submitted?

To be eligible for a Special Circumstance review, a student must be admitted to an eligible degree program, have submitted a current year FAFSA, registered for courses, and complete any required FAFSA Verification, if selected. Once the application period is open, usually late summer of each year, a completed application can be submitted under the following conditions.

- 1.) After the qualifying event AND reduction in income has occurred AND the required documentation can be fully provided. **An appeal cannot be submitted prior to or in anticipation of the income reduction event.**
- 2.) Changes in employment or income due solely to a student's anticipated enrollment are subject to a 6-month waiting period to demonstrate a required prolonged reduction of income. For example, a student who is scheduled to begin school in August and will leave their job or have a reduced schedule when school begins, must be able to demonstrate 6 months of reduced income to file an appeal to establish the necessary income reduction requirements.

One (1) Special Circumstance review can be submitted per award year and no requests can be made after the academic year ends, or if no longer attending the current award period, or academic year. *** Note: Requests submitted (or reviewed) after January 1, 2026 will be required to submit a completed 2025 federal tax return and W2s.**

How long does a review take?

Special Circumstance reviews take 3-4 weeks to complete due to the in-depth analysis required and number of applications. The student will be notified via their SCC email when a determination is issued. All determinations by the Financial Aid Office are final, by law, and cannot be appealed to SCC or the US Department of Education. You are expected to utilize the initial official aid offer to cover immediate costs as needed, appeals cannot be rushed to accommodate a specific timeline.

What does the appeal require?

This application consists of five (5) parts collecting information of: your household, qualifying circumstance, verifying documentation, explanation detailing qualifying circumstance and change or impact to your household financial situation, projected income statement (for use only if reporting current year income reduction in 2024 before tax year can be filed), and certification and acknowledgement of terms and conditions.

Whose information is required?

Dependent Students: A dependent status student whose parent information is required on the FAFSA must submit financial information such as tax returns, W2s, paystubs, etc. and other required information for the full household which includes the dependent student and parent(s), regardless of whose income changed.

Independent Students: An independent student will submit their information, and spouse's, if married at the time of submitting appeal, including financial information such as tax returns, W2s, paystubs, etc. for the household, regardless of whose income changed.

What should the statement explain for the qualifying circumstance?

The circumstance should be reported in a factual basis detailing the primary issue of the circumstance and impact on the household finances at the present time. Statements involving timeframes and background details outside the qualifying circumstance, or not directly relevant, are not considered and could result in a denial.

What if I had a Special Circumstance approved at another school?

If you have completed this process at another school, that determination is valid only at that institution. Federal regulations require each school to make an independent determination; approval at one institution does not guarantee approval at other institutions where different determinations may be reached.

What are the possible outcomes of a Special Circumstance Appeal?

***Approved or Denied determinations are final and cannot be appealed to SCC or the US Department of Education.**

Approval: A full appeal application was submitted with a verified qualifying circumstance, detailed statements, and required documentation substantiates the ability to pay for education expenses has been significantly impacted.

More Information Required: The Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) may contact student or parent to request additional information to verify and substantiate the event and change of income. Incomplete appeals are subject to denial if the initial application lacks a qualifying basis, documentation, or if information not provided when requested.

Denied: An appeal lacks a qualifying circumstance, lacks required documentation, incomplete or irrelevant explanation, or income change was not sufficient enough for a change in the SAI calculation.

2025-2026 Special Circumstance Appeal

Student Name: _____ SCC Student ID#: _____

Complete Sections 1 through 5:

1. **Report your Household:** Report the members of your immediate household for the current 2025/26 year.
 - **Independent Students:** Include yourself, your spouse and children you are financial supporting if providing more than 51% of their total financial support currently from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026, and reported on your 2024 federal tax return as dependents.
 - **Dependent Students:** Include yourself, your parent(s), even if you do not live with them, siblings who are also claimed as dependents of your parents on their 2024 tax return, and any other members of the household that parents are financially supporting (by providing more than 51% of the total financial support) from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. * See notes below regarding other non-family members.

Full Name	Age	Relation to student	Name of College Attending & State
		Self (student)	Southeast Community College, NE

- * Do not report non-family members (friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, significant other) if they provide their own support and just residing in same household. If non-family members reported, further information required to determine the level of support provided including that individual's current income information such as tax return, paystubs, W2s, benefit statements, Social Security statements. Generally, if they receive support from their own income sources or benefits, do not list.
- * Other relatives claimed (e.g. grandparents, cousins, niece/nephews), if not claimed on parents' household tax return as dependent or exemption, will require further information to determine the level of support provided including that individual's current income information such as tax return, paystubs, W2s, benefit statements, Social Security statements or other benefit details. Generally, if they receive support from their own income sources or benefits, do not list.
- * Minor aged (under 19) individuals reported who are not children of student or parent household will require further information to determine the level of support provided including court order of legal guardianship, federal benefits the minor is receiving including SNAP, TANF, Medicaid or their custodial family, and explanation why the minor is not in custody of biological parents. Please note, foster children placed by DHHS or other state managed agencies cannot be claimed as dependents in the household, according to US Department of Education regulations, and should not be reported in the household size.

2. Select situation(s) below experienced by household and provide the listed documentation for review:

	Select your Qualifying Circumstance	Documents required to submit for the circumstance selected (<i>insufficient or incomplete documentation will result in denial of application</i>). Dependent Status Students: Student and Parent information is required. Independent Status Students: Student and Spouse information required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involuntary change of household income in 2024 compared to 2023 income: e.g., family business or farm loss or closure due to abnormal economic event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of Parent(s) 2024 Federal 1040 & Schedules (1,2,3, C,D,E,F,K1) <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of Student (and spouse's) 2024 Federal 1040 & Schedules (1,2,3,C,D,E,F,K1) <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of 2024 W-2(s) for parent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of 2024 W-2(s) for student (and spouse, if married) <input type="checkbox"/> Court records ordering foreclosure, forfeiture, bankruptcy, or liquidation <input type="checkbox"/> Accountant or investment broker business asset liquidation statements <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment Benefit Statement (must be within 90 days from date issued) <input type="checkbox"/> If parent(s) or student did not file and are not required to file a 2024 federal 1040 please select box to indicate: <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Student (An IRS Verification of Non-Filing Letter may be required from IRS.gov) <input type="checkbox"/> If parent(s) are not required to file taxes, provide a signed and dated explanation on separate page of how family is financially supported.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involuntary loss of employment that reduced family income in 2024 compared to 2023 income: e.g., termination, furlough, disability, natural disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of Parent(s) 2024 Federal 1040 & Schedules (1,2,3,C,F,K1) <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of Student (and spouse's) 2024 Federal 1040 & Schedules (1,2,3,C,F,K1) <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of 2024 W-2(s) for parent(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of 2024 W-2(s) for student (and spouse, if married) <input type="checkbox"/> Official employer termination or severance letter verifying last date of employment and severance details. <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment Benefit Statement for 2024/25, year-to-date for all payments, (must be within 90 days from date issued) <input type="checkbox"/> If parent(s) or student did not file and are not required to file a 2024 federal 1040 please select box to indicate: <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Student (An IRS Verification of Non-Filing Letter may be required from IRS.gov) <input type="checkbox"/> If not required to file taxes, provide a signed and dated explanation on separate page of how family is financially supported <input type="checkbox"/> Disability Statement from physician or court, AND current Social Security benefit letter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Involuntary change of income in 2025 : e.g., family business or farm loss or closure due to abnormal economic event Or Involuntary loss of employment that reduced family income in 2025 : e.g., termination, furlough, disability, natural disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Court records ordering foreclosure, forfeiture, bankruptcy, or liquidation(business/farm) <input type="checkbox"/> Accountant or investment broker business asset liquidation statements (business/farm) <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of all student (and spouses', if married) pay stubs for 2025 year-to-date <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of all parent(s) pay stubs for 2025 year-to-date <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment Benefit Statement for 2025 year-to-date for all payments, (must be within 90 days from date issued) <input type="checkbox"/> Official employer termination or severance letter verifying last date of employment and severance details <input type="checkbox"/> If now returned to work, copy of all pay stub(s) year-to-day and date of hire <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete "Projected Income Statement for 2025" on page 4</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of 2025 Federal Tax Return and Schedules (1,2,3,C,F,K1) for all applications submitted or reviewed after January 1, 2026. <input type="checkbox"/> Disability Statement from physician or court, AND current Social Security benefit letter
<input type="checkbox"/>	One-Time, Non-Recurring Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of source and amount of income <input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of what funds were used for <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of 1099-R or IRA/Retirement distribution statement <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy Federal 1040 Return of year occurred (2024 or 2025)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Death of Spouse or Parent <u>after</u> filing FAFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Official Death Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of 2023/2024 Federal 1040 & Schedules (1,2,3,C,F,K1) of year occurred <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of 2023 and/or 2024 W-2(s) of year occurred <input type="checkbox"/> Life Insurance policy benefit disbursement(s) information, payout statement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Divorce or Separation <u>after</u> filing the FAFSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce Decree or Separation Agreement (from court or attorney) <input type="checkbox"/> Alimony details, if not included in court order decree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of separate residences (court docket, lease, utilities, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> W-2s from year of separation/divorce (2023, 2024, 2025) <input type="checkbox"/> Signed copy of Federal 1040 Return & Schedules(1,2,3,C,F,K1) for 2023,2024, 2025
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unusual medical, dental, nursing home costs (paid out-of-pocket & not covered by insurance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide explanation of the healthcare expenses incurred <input type="checkbox"/> Billing statements, proof of out-of-pocket payments, receipts of payments <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance documentation verifying covered and non-covered expenses <input type="checkbox"/> Federal 1040 Return with Schedule A for itemized medical deductions <input type="checkbox"/> Medical providers statement of medical necessity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other immediate family members enrolled in eligible Title IV post-secondary education program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Billing statements and payment receipts for out-of-pocket costs tuition <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Aid Offer letter from institutions attending <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions letter of Acceptance and proof of enrollment status <input type="checkbox"/> Employer letter of reimbursement and or college 529 savings plans statements

3. Detailed Explanation of Circumstance(s)

On this page (or separate typed or written page) provide a **signed and dated statement** that explains your extenuating circumstance(s) in detail. 1.) The statement should factually detail how the student's or family's financial circumstance changed since 2023. 2.) Explain how or why the circumstance impacts student's or family's ability to contribute towards the cost of education; and why the official aid offer determined is not sufficient to cover the costs.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

4. Projected Income Statement for current 2025-year income reduction circumstance

Only complete projected income statement if you selected change of income or loss of employment in 2025 (in section 2). Otherwise, if did not select 2025 income change (in section 2), skip to section 5. Place zeros (\$0) on lines that would otherwise be blank. Supporting documentation is required for all current year-to-date income including but not limited to year-to-date paystubs, unemployment benefit statements, and recurring retirement distributions, SSI, child support, etc.

Projected Income Statement for 2025	
Estimated Taxable Income to be reported on Federal Tax Return	2025 Estimates
Estimated Student (& spouse, if married) taxable wages	\$
Estimated Father/Stepfather's taxable wages (for dependent students)	\$
Estimated Mother/Stepmother's taxable wages (for dependent students)	\$
Estimated interest and dividends	\$
Estimated Net Income from business, farm, rental properties, royalties, partnerships, estates, trusts or other gains	\$
Estimated Other Taxable Income such as alimony, severance pay, capital gains	\$
Estimated IRA/Pension: Total: Rollover:	\$
Estimated Unemployment Compensation	\$
Estimated Other Taxable Income (source: _____)	\$
TOTAL TAXABLE INCOME:	\$

Estimated Untaxed Income	2025 Estimates
Estimated Pre-Tax pension contributions (difference between "Medicare Wages" and "Taxable Wages" on W-2)	\$
Estimated Deductible IRA, SEP, SIMPLE, Keogh Payments	\$
Estimated Tax-Exempt Interest	\$
Estimated Worker's Compensation	\$
Estimated Child Support Received for all Children	\$
Estimated Social Security Benefits (for all Family Members)	\$
Estimated Other Untaxable Income (source: _____)	\$
TOTAL UNTAXED INCOME:	\$

5. Sign the Certification Statement

Certification Statement

All of the information provided by the undersigned is true and complete to the best of my/our knowledge. If asked by the Financial Aid Administrator (FAA), I/we agree to provide any additional proof of the information provided on this form. I/we understand that underestimating projected income could result in reduced eligibility, repayment of aid or both. I/we further understand that purposely providing false, misleading, or fraudulent information to obtain Federal Student Aid is subject to investigation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Inspector General. Please review each item below verifying you have submitted the following requirements:

- I/we have reported a qualifying circumstance(s).
- I/we have provided a detailed statement explaining circumstance(s).
- I/we have attached all required documentation for the reported circumstance(s).

All determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Requests that do not include all required documentation will be considered incomplete. Incomplete applications are subject to a denial determination if they remain incomplete after an attempt to collect additional information and cannot be filed again.

Everyone who has provided information on this appeal must sign and date below. Dependent students: the student and at least one parent who was a contributor on the FAFSA must sign the certification. Independent students: the student and spouse, if married, must sign the certification.

A "wet" signature is required by federal regulations, electronic signatures cannot be accepted.

Independent Student:

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Spouse Signature: _____ Date: _____

(If student is married)

Dependent Student:

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Email: _____

Parent Phone Number: _____

Due to data security requirements, all documentation must be submitted to using one of the following methods: In person to any SCC campus Financial Aid Office; faxed to 402-437-2402; mailed through U.S. Postal Service to SCC-Financial Aid Office, 8800 "O" Street, Lincoln, NE 68520; or electronically using our secure drop box at <https://uploads.southeast.edu/financialaid>. Do not send sensitive documentation by email, it may not be secure.