# Education Department's FAFSA Overhaul Plagued by Early Warnings and Implementation Issues



**Education Department's FAFSA Overhaul Faced Early Warnings**

**WASHINGTON, May 20, 2024** — Documents obtained by The New York Times reveal that top officials at the Education Department were alerted to potential pitfalls in overhauling the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as early as 2020. Despite these warnings, the project, aimed at simplifying the application process, faced significant issues, impacting the college application season this year.

In December 2020, internal documents were circulated among officials, including James Kvaal, then-under secretary of education, and Benjamin Miller, a deputy under secretary. These documents underscored the complexity and time-intensive nature of the project, advising that the 2022 deadline set by Congress was too optimistic. Instead, officials suggested a more realistic implementation by the 2024-2025 cycle.

Despite obtaining a one-year extension to October 1, 2023, the Education Department encountered delays and technical problems, leading to the release of the simplified form on December 31, 2023. Even after the launch, numerous bugs affected both applicants and college administrators.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona stated that the department was juggling multiple significant mandates within a short period, which included restarting student loan repayments and approving new loan servicing contracts, all without additional funding from Congress.

The Government Accountability Office has documented concerns and is investigating the department's management of the project. Following the fraught rollout, the Education Department has allocated $100 million to assist students and colleges, aiming to stabilize the process for future applicants.