

Simply Stated

No. 15

March 1981

Robbin Battison, Editor

The "FISAP," Before and After

by Joanne Landesman

Look at the forms on pages two and three. Which one would you rather fill out?

The "BEFORE" form, on the left inside page of this issue, is one that postsecondary schools must fill out for the Department of Education (ED) in order to participate in several student financial assistance programs. The form, called the "FISAP" for short, functions both as a *fiscal operations report* for the previous period and as an *application to participate* in the program during the next period. It also has two audiences: continuing participants and new applicants. (The form comes in a booklet with instructions, which we do not include here.) The people responsible for this form report that many institutions—even those with professional administrators—have problems filling it out. The "AFTER" form, on the right, is our suggested revision—the result of a workshop exercise.

If you look at both forms again you can easily identify some of the problems with the current form. For example, where's the title? The current form makes very little use of differences in size and weight of type, so it is difficult to pick out the title. In fact, the title is very long and is not the first thing you see at the top of the page—nor does it sit by itself on an entire line. It takes up several lines in a box that has several boxes to the right of it.

In a workshop that the Document Design Center developed for the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA), we and OSFA staff examined the FISAP together. Our linguists, writers, and graphic designers wrote a manual for the workshop that was geared specifically to OSFA forms. In the workshop, we taught principles of graphic design and clear writing, using OSFA documents as working models. The OSFA participants then used these principles to criticize their own forms and suggest improvements.

The "AFTER" form is our suggested revision, based on ideas that OSFA staff had during the workshop. The Department of Education has not officially or unofficially adopted our suggestions.

BEFORE The original form is visually confusing; there is no pattern of lines to draw the reader's eye in a given direction. The numbered items begin at different points across the page, so the reader must read across the page to discover where a numbered item begins. It is difficult to find the title, because there are no graphic cues that make it stand out. Extraneous lines and boxes within boxes add to the confusion. Instructions on where to send the completed form appear near the beginning.

AFTER The revised form uses the principle of a grid which visually divides the page into sections. This helps the eye move naturally down the page. All of the numbered headings begin at the far left margin, where the eye would naturally go in the normal left-to-right progression of reading English. The title is on the top of the page, in boldface type, so that it is the

§ The monthly newsletter of the Document Design Center, American Institutes for Research, 1055 Thomas Jefferson Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007

Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education Washington, D.C. 20202	PLEASE READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM	FORM APPROVED FEDAC No. R-54 APP. EXP.: 6/81															
FISCAL OPERATIONS REPORT FOR THE 1979-80 AWARD PERIOD (July 1, 1979- June 30, 1980) AND APPLICATION TO PARTICIPATE July 1, 1981 through June 30, 1982 - NATIONAL DIRECT STUDENT LOAN, SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANTS AND COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS		SERIAL NUMBER (CSGB)															
		ENTITY NUMBER (EN)															
		<table border="1" style="width:100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width:60%; text-align: center;">1. INSTITUTION</td> <td style="width:40%; text-align: center;">2. Program Duration/Type</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">a. Control b. Area Vocational/Technical?</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </td> </tr> </table>	1. INSTITUTION	2. Program Duration/Type	a. Control b. Area Vocational/Technical?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No										
1. INSTITUTION	2. Program Duration/Type																
a. Control b. Area Vocational/Technical?																	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No																	
NAME AND ADDRESS OF INSTITUTION (Include city, state and ZIP code)		COMPLETE APPROPRIATE PARTS OF THIS FORM AND RETURN THE ORIGINAL AND ONE COPY, POST MARKED NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 31, 1980, TO: U.S. Department of Education Office of Student Financial Assistance Division of Program Operations Campus and State Grants Branch ROB #3 - Room 4621 Washington, D.C. 20202															
GENERAL INFORMATION (SEE INSTRUCTIONS)																	
ELIGIBILITY (TO BE COMPLETED BY NONPARTICIPANTS IN THE 12 MONTHS ENDING JUNE 30, 1981)																	
3. HAVE YOU RECEIVED NOTIFICATION FROM THE DIVISION OF ELIGIBILITY AND AGENCY EVALUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF YOUR ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE PROGRAMS? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No IF NOT, HAVE ALL REQUIRED MATERIALS BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE DIVISION OF ELIGIBILITY AND AGENCY EVALUATION? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No IN ORDER TO BE ASSURED OF CONSIDERATION, YOU MUST FILE YOUR APPLICATION AND MUST ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY BY OCT. 31, 1980.																	
MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (SEE INSTRUCTIONS FOR TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID TO BE INCLUDED)																	
INSTITUTIONS WHICH PARTICIPATED IN CWSP AND/OR SEOGP IN 1979-80 COMPLETE THIS BLOCK	INSTITUTIONS WHICH RECEIVED CWSP AND/OR SEOGP AWARDS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1980-81 COMPLETE THESE BLOCKS ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS.																
4 INSTITUTIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AND STUDENT AID EXPENDITURES JULY 1, 1979 THROUGH JUNE 30, 1980 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px; margin-left: 20px;">\$</div>	INSTITUTIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AND STUDENT AID EXPENDITURES	<table border="1" style="width:100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width:5%; text-align: center;">5.</td> <td style="width:70%;">12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/78</td> <td style="width:25%; text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6.</td> <td>12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/79</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">7.</td> <td>12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/80</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">8.</td> <td>TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">9.</td> <td>3-YEAR AVERAGE</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> </table>	5.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/78	\$	6.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/79	\$	7.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/80	\$	8.	TOTAL	\$	9.	3-YEAR AVERAGE	\$
5.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/78	\$															
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7.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/80	\$															
8.	TOTAL	\$															
9.	3-YEAR AVERAGE	\$															
MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT (JOB LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM)																	
INSTITUTIONS WHICH OPERATED A JOB LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND USED CWS FUNDS AUTHORIZED FOR THE 1979-80 AWARD PERIOD COMPLETE THIS BLOCK.	INSTITUTIONS WHICH ARE OPERATING A JOB LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR THE FIRST TIME AND USING CWSP FUNDS RECEIVED IN THE 1980-81 AWARD PERIOD COMPLETE THESE BLOCKS ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS.																
10 INSTITUTIONAL EXPENDITURES FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS ENDING JUNE 30, 1980 <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px; margin-left: 20px;">\$</div>	INSTITUTIONAL EXPENDITURES	<table border="1" style="width:100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width:5%; text-align: center;">11.</td> <td style="width:70%;">12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/78</td> <td style="width:25%; text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">12.</td> <td>12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/79</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">13.</td> <td>12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/80</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">14.</td> <td>TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">15.</td> <td>3-YEAR AVERAGE</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> </table>	11.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/78	\$	12.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/79	\$	13.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/80	\$	14.	TOTAL	\$	15.	3-YEAR AVERAGE	\$
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12.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/79	\$															
13.	12 MONTHS ENDING 6/30/80	\$															
14.	TOTAL	\$															
15.	3-YEAR AVERAGE	\$															
16 THE INSTITUTION DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THE NATIONAL DIRECT STUDENT LOAN, COLLEGE WORK-STUDY OR SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMS IN THE 12 MONTHS ENDING JUNE 30, 1980 <input type="checkbox"/>																	
COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM-WAIVER REQUESTS																	
17 CHECK IF YOU WISH TO APPLY AS A "DEVELOPING INSTITUTION" UNDER TITLE III OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965, AS AMENDED, FOR A PARTIAL WAIVER OF THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF CWS COMPENSATION TO STUDENTS DURING THE 12-MONTH PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 1982. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS) <input type="checkbox"/>																	
18 CHECK IF YOU WISH TO APPLY FOR A PARTIAL WAIVER OF THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF THE CWS COMPENSATION TO STUDENTS DURING THE 12-MONTH PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 1982, ON THE BASIS THAT AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS ENROLLED HALF-TIME OR MORE DURING THE 12-MONTHS ENDING JUNE 30, 1981 HAVE PARENTS WHOSE ANNUAL ADJUSTED INCOME DOES NOT EXCEED \$7,500 PER YEAR. <input type="checkbox"/>																	
ED FORM 646 (9/80) Replaces OE Form 646 (9/79) which is obsolete																	

Fiscal Operations Report For the 1979-80 Award Period (July 1, 1979-June 30, 1980)

Application to Participate (July 1, 1981-June 30, 1982) NSDL • SEOGP • CWSP

1. Name of Institution

Serial No. (CSGB) _____ Entity No _____

Address (Include Zip Code) _____

Previous Name of Institution
(If changed during the year) _____

Previous Address _____

DRAFT

2. Institution

A. Control

- 1. Public
- 2. Private/Non-profit
- 3. Proprietary

B. Is your institution designated as an "area vocational/technical school?"

- Yes
- No

3. Duration/Type of Instructional Program (Select the highest code number that applies)

- 1. Less than one year
- 2. One year but less than two years
- 3. Two years but less than three years
- 4. Three years but less than four years
- 5. Four years (bachelor's degree only)
- 6. Five years or more
- 7. Post bachelor's degrees only

4. Participation

A. Did your school participate in any of the National Direct Student Loan, College Work-Study or Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Programs in the 12 months ending June 30, 1980?

- Yes (If you check "Yes", do not answer question 5.)
- No

B. Is your school participating in any of these programs this year (the 12 months ending June 30, 1981?)

- Yes (If you check "Yes", do not answer question 5.)
- No

If you answer "No" to both A and B, you must answer question 5

5. Eligibility (If you answer this question, do not answer Questions 6 and 7)

A. Has the Department of Education's Division of Eligibility and Agency Evaluation notified you that you are eligible to participate in these Programs?

- Yes
- No

B. If not, have you sent in all required materials to the Division of Eligibility and Agency Evaluation?

- Yes
- No

NOTE: To be sure that you will be considered for this program, you must have established your eligibility to participate before the deadline for sending in this application.

6. Financial Aid Expenditures (See instructions for types of financial aid to be included)

Answer A or B

A. If your school participated in CWSP or SEOGP in 1979-80, what did it spend for scholarships and student aid from July 1, 1979 - June 30, 1980?

\$ _____

B. If your school received CWSP or SEOGP Awards for the first time in 1980-81, what did it spend for scholarships and student aid for the

12 months ending 6/30/78?	\$ _____	Total	\$ _____
12 months ending 6/30/79?	\$ _____	3 Year	
12 months ending 6/30/80?	\$ _____	Average	\$ _____

7. Job Location and Development Program

Answer A or B

A. If your school operated a job location and development program and used CWS funds that were authorized for the 1979-80 Award Period, what did it spend for the 12 months ending June 30, 1980?

\$ _____

B. If your school is operating a job location and development program for the first time and is using CWS funds that it received in the 1980-81 Award Period, what did it spend for the

12 months ending 6/30/78?	\$ _____	Total	\$ _____
12 months ending 6/30/79?	\$ _____	3 Year	
12 months ending 6/30/80?	\$ _____	Average	\$ _____

8. College Work-Study Program - Waiver Request for "Developing Institutions"

Do you want to apply as a "Developing Institution" under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (as amended) for a partial waiver of the non-federal share of CWS Compensation to Students during the 12 month period ending June 30, 1982? (See instructions)

- Yes
- No

9. College Work-Study Program - Waiver Request on the Basis of Parents' Income

Do you want to apply for a partial waiver of the non-federal share of the CWS Compensation to students during the 12 month period ending June 30, 1982? (You may do so if at least 50% of the students who are enrolled half time or more during the 12 months ending June 30, 1981 have parents whose annual adjusted income does not exceed \$7,500 per year)

- Yes
- No

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Division of Program Operations
Common and State Grants Branch
R08 Ms. 3 - Room 4621
Washington, D.C. 20202

Complete the appropriate parts of this form and RETURN THE ORIGINAL AND ONE COPY, postmarked no later than 10/31/80 to:

first thing the reader sees. We have eliminated the boxes and made the mailing address and deadline date the last item on the form, set apart by size and weight of type.

BEFORE There is almost no variation in the size or weight of type. This makes it difficult to pick out important words or phrases or to locate items of interest. Everything is in uppercase type (all capitals). Research has shown that a combination of upper and lowercase type is easier to read, because lowercase letters have distinct outlines that are more readily recognizable. Using all uppercase letters slows reading time by about 15% and takes up about 30% more space than upper and lowercase letters.

AFTER We have printed the name of each item in boldface type two points larger than the type we used in the main text. The numbers in front of each title are large and bold. This makes it easy to identify the separate items. We used a combination of upper and lowercase type throughout the form.

BEFORE Some of the items are confusing because they have no context. For example, item 1 has a space labelled "Control," but the user must look in the instructions to know what "Control" means and what would be a suitable response. Item 2 presents the same problem.

AFTER We have incorporated some of the instructions into the text of the form. For items 2 and 3 on the new form, all the user must do is to check a box. It is no longer necessary to go to the instructions just to find out what the item refers to.

BEFORE Items that ask for the same kind of information are not written in parallel language. Items 3, 16, 17, and 18 use different structures, even though they are really all "yes/no" questions. Item 3 asks a question and provides two boxes for "yes" and "no" answers. Item 16 is a statement. The user must check the box if the *negative* statement is true. Items 17 and 18 are imperatives that tell the user to check a box for a *positive* response. This is very confusing and can lead to errors.

AFTER We have rewritten these items in parallel language. On our revised form, these are now items 5, 4, 8, and 9. Each asks a simple question and has two boxes, one for a "yes" response and one for a "no" response.

BEFORE The form does not create logical "pathways" for the two groups of users, and this increases the burden for both groups. The burden that the form imposes appears even greater than it is, because there are eighteen separate items.

AFTER By reorganizing, we have reduced the burden—both real and apparent—that the form imposes on the user. We have made the old item 16 into the new item 4A and made explicit—as 4B—the question that is *implicit* in the parenthetical instruction to question 3 on the old form. These changes create separate "pathways" through the form for the two groups of users. The directions we have added in the new items 4, 5, 6, and 7 reinforce the "pathways." We have also grouped together related items to create a smaller number of items that are divided into parts. With only nine items to complete, the form appears—and is—more manageable.

The "AFTER" form is, of course, a working draft. A form's final test is in the field.

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Washington, DC 20007

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