

# The new financial aid forms among the income



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BUSTER**

The millions of college students heading to campus next year will not include an estimated 28, 000 who will be denied federal financial aid because they have admitted to a recent drug conviction. Along with those, another 12, 000 more may also be denied federal assistance because they have failed to answer a question that has been placed on the new financial aid forms among the income and background inquiries. The roughly ten million students who fill out financial aid forms will face a crucial question from the government; have you ever been convicted of possessing or selling illegal drugs. As a part of the 1998 amendment to the Higher Education Act any person applying for college aid is required to answer a question about previous drug convictions. The Clinton administration basically ignored the law due to the delay in processing that it created when nearly one million applicants skipped the question, but the Bush administration has decided to fully enforce the law. This will be the second school year that the federal student aid has been contingent on a clean drug record, but it is the first time that aid is being denied to applicants who leave the question blank. It has been said that the reason for the vast amount of students leaving the question blank is because of the confusing fashion in which the question was asked. Last year applicants had to respond by checking off numbers about convictions and when they took place.

In an attempt to avoid this from happening again, department officials brought together groups of aid administrators last summer to help them make the question more comprehensible. The new form also indicates to the applicant that they are not allowed to leave the question blank. The law will suspend and maybe even revoke grants, loans or work assistance from

people convicted of possession or sale of controlled substances. A first offense for a possession conviction makes a student ineligible for one year after the date of conviction and two years for a second offense. A third possession conviction would result in indefinite ineligibility. Drug sale convictions bring tougher penalties. The first offense will carry a two year suspension and indefinite ineligibility for the second conviction. Words/

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