

FAFSA FAQs

Am I eligible for student aid? In order to receive federal student aid there are requirements. The following is a list of *some* of the requirements:

- You must be a United States citizen or eligible noncitizen of the United States *with* a valid Social Security Number;
- You must have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, or pass an approved "ability to benefit" test;
- You must enroll in an eligible program as a regular student seeking a degree or certificate;
- If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 25, you must register or already be registered with Selective Service.

How do I apply for aid?

- The first step in the financial aid process is to complete and submit the FAFSA.
- *For help with filling out the FAFSA*, you can go to www.studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/completing_fafsa/index.html
- If you provide all required information and required signatures, your FAFSA will be processed in 3-5 days and a Student Aid Report (SAR) will be sent to you. Your SAR will summarize the data reported on your FAFSA. You should check your SAR carefully for accuracy and keep a copy for your records.
- The SAR also contains a Data Release Number (DRN), which appears on the first page in the upper right hand corner of a paper or an electronic SAR. The DRN is also located on your confirmation page. You will need the DRN when you call the Federal Student Aid Information Center to change certain information on your application, such as to add or delete a school code. If your FAFSA is complete, an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) will be printed in the upper right hand corner of the SAR. Your EFC is based on all of the information reported on your FAFSA. Your school will use the EFC to award your financial aid.
- **Note:** Your EFC is **not** the amount of money your family will have to pay for college **nor** is it the amount of federal student aid you will receive. It is a number used by your school to calculate the amount of federal student aid you are eligible to receive.

How will I receive my financial aid?

- Your school will award you a financial aid package to help meet your financial need. ***Financial need is the difference between the school's cost of attendance (including living expenses) and your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).***
- If you believe that you have unusual circumstances that should be taken into account, such as unusual medical or dental expenses or a significant change in income from one year to the next, contact the financial aid office at your school for assistance.
- Federal Student Aid is paid to students through the school. You should receive an award letter from your school, which details your aid award types and amounts. Your aid awards will likely be disbursed each semester, quarter, or other payment period. Typically, the school first applies your aid towards your tuition, fees, and room and board (if you live on campus). The remainder is paid to you for other expenses.

What is in my financial aid package?

Your financial aid package is likely to include funds from the **Federal Student Aid (FSA)** programs. **Note that not all schools participate in all FSA programs.** These FSA programs, described below, are administered by Federal Student Aid and provide over \$33 billion a year to students attending post secondary schools:

- **Federal Pell Grants** are available to undergraduate students. Graduate students in a teaching credential program may also qualify. *Grants do not have to be repaid.*
- **Academic Competitiveness Grants** are available to 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students. *Grants do not have to be repaid.*
- **National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grants** are available to third, fourth, and fifth (for programs requiring five years) year undergraduate students. *Grants do not have to be repaid.*
- **Federal Stafford Loans** are Student Loans that *must be repaid* and are available to both undergraduate and graduate students.
 - If your school participates in the Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program, the federal government provides the funds for the Stafford Loan.
 - If your school participates in the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program, a private lender provides the funds for your Stafford Loan, although the Federal Government guarantees the loan funds.
 - First-year undergraduates are eligible for loans up to \$5,500. Amounts increase for subsequent years of study, with higher amounts for graduate students. The interest rates may vary based on when the loan is borrowed. There are two types of Stafford Loans:

Subsidized Stafford loan - A loan for which the government pays the interest while you are in school, during grace periods, and during any deferment periods.

Unsubsidized Stafford loan - A loan for which you are responsible for paying all the interest that accrues at any point in time.

- **Federal PLUS Loans** are unsubsidized loans made to *parents of undergraduate students*. If your parents cannot obtain a PLUS loan, you may be eligible to borrow additional Unsubsidized Stafford loan funds. The interest rates may vary based on when the loan is borrowed.
- **Campus-Based Programs** are financial aid programs administered by participating schools. There are three Campus-Based programs.
 1. **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants** are grants available for undergraduates only; awards range from \$100-\$4,000.
 2. **Federal Work-Study** provides jobs to undergraduate and graduate students, allowing them to earn money to pay education expenses.
 3. **Perkins Loans** are low-interest (5 percent) loans that must be repaid; the maximum annual loan amount is \$4,000 for undergraduate students.
- **For more information about federal student aid, you can explore the Federal Student Aid Web site at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov.**

Am I eligible for other education benefits?

- Two educational income tax credits can reduce your or your parents' federal taxes. The credits are based on your college tuition and fee charges. The Hope tax credit can be claimed during the first two years of college, up to a maximum of \$1,800 per year. The Lifetime Learning tax credit is available for any level of post secondary study, up to a current maximum of \$2,000 per year. Note that only one type of credit (Hope or Lifetime Learning) may be claimed for a student in any given year. For more information about tax credits, you can visit the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov.

Where can I find more information?

- Information about other nonfederal assistance may be available from foundations, religious organizations, community organizations, and civic groups, as well as organizations related to your field of interest, such as the American Medical Association or American Bar Association. You can check with your parents' employers or unions to see if they award scholarships or have tuition payment plans.
- The financial aid office at the school that you plan to attend is also a good place to search for information. The financial aid office can tell you about student aid available from the state, the school itself, and other sources. The school is required to inform you of its financial aid procedures and deadlines, and how and when you will receive your financial aid award. You should read and understand each school's *satisfactory academic progress* policy and keep copies of your enrollment agreement, the school's catalog, and all financial aid documents (especially loan documents) that you receive.