



# Frequently Asked Financial Aid Questions

## **When should I apply for financial aid?**

While some federal funds, such as Pell Grant and Direct Loan, are generally available year round, there are other funds which are awarded on a first-come first-served basis. It is therefore recommended that you file your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1. For example, if you are applying for financial aid for the 2011-2012 academic year, you would complete a FAFSA as soon as your 2010 Federal 1040 tax information is available.

## **Can I file my FAFSA if my parent(s) or I have not filed taxes for 2010?**

Yes, it is important to file your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1, 2011 since this is the information used to award financial aid. DO NOT DELAY completing the FAFSA. You can submit the FAFSA using estimations of your tax figures, then correcting the FAFSA, if necessary, once you have the actual figures. If your taxes will not be completed by mid-February, it is recommended that you estimate your income information and file your FAFSA immediately. It is important that you complete the FAFSA process as soon as possible to be considered for the best possible financial aid package. You are encouraged to file as soon as you can – low-interest federal loans and Pell Grant will be available at any time to those who qualify.

## **Who should file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?**

Every student should file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year they attend college. Not only will this make you eligible for the federal programs that are available, it can also make you eligible for state and institutional programs.

## **What does "Verification" mean?**

Thirty percent of all submitted FAFSA applications submitted are randomly selected for an audit process called verification. Initial notification of verification will be on your Student Aid Report (SAR.) You will be instructed by the university on what you need to supply for documentation. Generally, this consists of a verification worksheet and submission of Federal 1040 tax forms.

Sometimes through the verification process, additional documents must be submitted to resolve discrepancies. Delays in submitting requested documentation may result in a reduced financial aid award.

## **Do I have to include parental information; can I be considered independent?**

Per federal regulations in filling out a FAFSA, you are dependent upon your parents until the age of 24. You must therefore use your parents' information on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Even if your parents do not claim you on their income taxes or you do not live in their home, you are considered dependent for the purposes of financial aid unless you meet one of the thirteen requirements below:

1. Were you born before January 1, 1988?
2. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate program?
3. As of today, are you married?
4. Do you have children who receive more than half of their support from you?
5. Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you now and through June 30, 2012?
6. At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?
7. Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training?
8. Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
9. Are you or were you an emancipated minor as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?
10. Are you or were you in legal guardianship as determined by a court in your state of legal residence?
11. At any time on or after July 1, 2010, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
12. At any time on or after July 1, 2010, did the director of an emergency shelter program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
13. At any time on or after July 1, 2010, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

## **What is a "Student Budget"?**

A student budget is the average cost of attendance which includes the following expenses: tuition/fees, room and board, books, travel, loan fees, and miscellaneous expenses. The budget can also include program-specific tool costs identified by the different colleges, and daycare expenses for children of independent students. A student can never receive more financial aid than the student budget.

## What is a Student Aid Report (SAR)?

The Student Aid Report (SAR) is a summary of the information that you provided on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If all the information is correct, you retain the SAR for your files. Please contact your Financial Aid Office for assistance if corrections are needed on your FAFSA.

The following calculation determines what types of financial aid students are eligible to receive:

$$\begin{array}{l} \textbf{Student Budget} \text{ (Average cost to attend the university of your} \\ \text{choice)} \\ - \textbf{Expected Family Contribution (EFC)} \text{ (As determined by the Free} \\ \text{Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is what the federal} \\ \text{government says your family can reasonably contribute to your cost} \\ \text{of education for one year.)} \\ \hline = \textbf{Financial Need} \text{ (Cost that the financial aid office tries to help you} \\ \text{with.)} \end{array}$$

In general, the higher your financial need, the greater your eligibility for gift aid, which is money that you do not have to pay back, or other need based aid. Even if you have no financial need, you are still able to receive non-need based aid, such as certain scholarships or Unsubsidized Direct Loans.

## What types of financial aid can I receive if I am not eligible for a Federal Pell Grant?

You will be notified on your Student Aid Report (SAR) whether or not you are eligible for a Federal Pell Grant. If you are not eligible for the Federal Pell Grant, you may still be able to receive other types of financial aid consisting of grants, low-interest federal student loans, scholarships and student employment.

## How do I pay for school?

The primary responsibility for paying for your educational expenses rests with you and your family. Financial aid programs are intended to assist students and families with their college costs.

## What is an "Award Notice"?

An award notice is your notification of your financial aid package.

Your award notice will provide you with the **average cost** of attendance at your university, including room and board, books, tuition and personal expenses. Your actual expenses may vary according to your personal needs and choices.

The term "financial aid" refers to loans, grants, work-study (student employment) and scholarship funds. Your award notice will inform you of the type(s) and amount(s) of financial aid you are being offered for the semester(s) or term(s) designated.

Financial aid awards may change for many different reasons. For instance, financial aid offices may be notified of scholarship awards after your initial award. Every time a change to your financial aid award is processed you will be notified via your Ferris email account. Each award notice supersedes the previous award notice.

It is important that you review and take action (if required) on every award notice by the date specified. Failure to do so could result in a loss of financial aid.

## Does financial aid cover summer semester?

Yes. At some universities summer semester begins an award year while at others the summer semester ends an award year. Be sure to check with your school of choice to be sure you have filed the correct Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Keep in mind, you are allotted a specific amount of financial aid per academic/award year. The amount of loan and grant monies you were awarded during your first two semesters will affect eligibility for the remaining semester. Some schools may also have a separate summer application so be sure to check with the financial aid office.

## What if the financial aid I am receiving is not enough to fulfill my financial needs?

There are alternative loans (loans that you must qualify for) available to students and/or parents, which can help bridge the gap between college costs and traditional financial aid resources (e.g. scholarships, grants, federal student loans). These loans are not guaranteed by the federal government and therefore often require the student to obtain a credit-worthy cosigner.

## How do I get the best financial aid package?

**FILE EARLY!!!** There are many benefits for filing early. Extra grant money and Perkins Loans may be available for qualified early filers. Filing early may also qualify you for state-sponsored scholarships. We strongly recommend that you file your FAFSA on-line at **[www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)**. To obtain a PIN number for an electronic signature for both parent(s) and student go to **[www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov)**. Filing on-line reduces FAFSA processing time from approximately 6 weeks to less than 3 days.