

Dear Parent/Guardian,

According to a web article *Understanding College Financial Aid* (<http://www.fafsa.com/understanding-fafsa/>) earning a college education is one of the best investments in your student's future. Today, between the increase in the price of college tuition, the weakened economy, and tightening credit, figuring out a plan to pay for college is more challenging than ever before. One thing that hasn't changed is the time and complexity of filling out the government's aid form known as the ***Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)***.

As recently as Dec. 2, 2008, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings said, "Sadly, many students, up to 8 million in fact, don't even apply for aid, in part because of all the red tape. We believe most would have been eligible for assistance." Fortunately, more than \$236 billion in financial aid is available to help pay for college and the key is filing your financial aid application, FAFSA, is the first step in applying for more than 90% of this money.

## **What Exactly Is a FAFSA?**

All college students are expected to contribute towards their education costs. How much students and their families are expected to contribute depends on their financial situation. The term used for this is called the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

The FAFSA is the form the U.S. Department of Education (ED) requires to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The government conducts a "need analysis" based on financial information, such as income, assets, and other family information, which students (and their parents if you are a dependent student) will be asked to provide.

An application is examined by a federal processor and the results are sent by computer to the financial aid offices of the colleges chosen.

The FAFSA is the application most colleges use to determine eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid, including grants, educational loans, and work-study programs.

## **Are you Eligible?**

Nearly every student is eligible for some form of financial aid, including low-interest Federal Stafford and/or parent PLUS loans, regardless of income or circumstances, provided that you:

- are a U.S. citizen, a U.S. national, or an eligible non-citizen;
- have a valid Social Security Number;
- have a high school diploma or GED;
- are registered with the U.S. Selective Service (if you are a male ages 18 to 25);
- complete a FAFSA promising to use any federal aid for educational purposes;
- do not owe refunds on any federal student grants;
- are not in default on any student loans; and
- have not been found guilty of the sale or possession of illegal drugs during a period when you received federal student aid.

## **Applying for Aid - FAFSA Is Step #1**

In order to even be considered for federal financial aid, it is crucial that the FAFSA application is thoroughly and accurately completed in addition to being submitted **on time**.

In addition, most states, colleges and universities use the FAFSA to award other types of aid, including state-and-college-sponsored financial aid such as grants, loans, and work-study programs.

Besides the FAFSA, some states and colleges require that you file other applications for aid. It will be important for your student to check with the college's financial aid administrator for any state or college-specific requirements.

### **What is the deadline?**

You can file your FAFSA with the Department of Education beginning in January. Federal aid is limited and much of it is offered on a first-come, first-served basis, so the earlier you file the better your chances of accessing the most financial aid possible.

There may be specific filing deadlines as early as the first week of January depending on the state, college, and university. It is also very important to pay close attention to how colleges word their deadline instructions. Some refer to the FAFSA submission date as – the *Transaction Receipt Date* – while others refer to the date your *completed* aid application must be sent by the federal processor to a college's financial aid office. Missing the submission deadline can ruin your opportunity for financial aid. When a college is selected, be sure to check with the colleges' financial aid administrators to learn the exact FAFSA deadline. Taking the time to fill out the application early and file as close to January 1 as possible is highly recommended.

Part of the curriculum in your student's Senior Seminar class is to complete a FAFSA Scavenger Hunt to familiarize them with the FAFSA terminology and what is required. Then together, you and your student will be able to make the process of filling out and filing the FAFSA by the specific deadline less challenging and more successful.

For more information, resources, and completing your FAFSA online please go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>.

Sincerely,

Senior Seminar Instructor

# FAFSA Intent Form

**FAFSA<sup>SM</sup>**  
Free Application for Federal Student Aid

## Student Information:

First Name:	
Last Name:	
Birthdate:	
Zip Code:	

## FAFSA Completion: *(Check one please)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read the parent/guardian letter regarding the FAFSA and completed the FAFSA on ____ date.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read the parent/guardian letter regarding the FAFSA and need additional information regarding the FAFSA.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have read the parent/guardian letter regarding the FAFSA and have selected not to complete the FAFSA.

Question/Comment:

Parent/Guardian Signature:		Date:
Student Signature:		Date: