What is Financial Aid?

Financial aid is any type of financial assistance provided to help you with educational expenses.

Types of Financial Aid

Grants & Scholarships

- Grants and scholarships are gift aid that do not have to be repaid, and are based on a student’s financial need or merit. They are provided by colleges, universities, states, the federal government, and private organizations.
- Private, local, and national sources all offer private scholarships. Check with your school counselor, parents’ employers, civic groups, public libraries, and community organizations to find out about local scholarships.

Work-Study

Work-study programs allow students to work part time on or near campus while in college. Students earn their awards throughout the year by being paid directly for the hours that they work. Earnings may be used for any expenses. The work-study award isn’t deducted from the college bill, but instead paid to the student in paycheck form throughout the academic year.

Federal Student Loans

Federal student loans are available to eligible students regardless of income or credit score. They offer fixed interest rates and various repayment options. Check with your college financial aid office for additional information.

Have questions? Call (800) 449-MEFA (6332), email info@mefa.org, or visit us online at mefa.org.

Connect with us online for useful information on college planning.
Financial Aid Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Application</th>
<th>FAFSA</th>
<th>CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®</th>
<th>College’s Financial Aid Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>Who requires it?</td>
<td>All colleges</td>
<td>Some colleges (primarily private)</td>
<td>Some colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost?</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>$25 for initial application including one college, plus $16 for each additional school*</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Available online or paper?</td>
<td>Online is recommended fafsa.gov</td>
<td>Online only profileonline.collegeboard.org</td>
<td>Depends on college</td>
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<td>When is the form available?</td>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>Depends on college</td>
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<td>How do I make corrections after the form is submitted?</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Send new information directly to colleges</td>
<td>Send new information directly to colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do I get started?</td>
<td>Create an FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov</td>
<td>Create a collegeboard.org account and complete the online CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE registration</td>
<td>Obtain the application form directly from the college</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who signs the form?</td>
<td>Student and Parent</td>
<td>Student or Parent</td>
<td>Depends on college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is it used?</td>
<td>Calculates eligibility for federal, state, and some college/university financial aid</td>
<td>Calculates eligibility for college/university financial aid</td>
<td>Calculates eligibility for college/university financial aid</td>
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* Fee waivers may be available. Check with your school counselor.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What forms do I need in order to apply for financial aid?
Three of the most commonly used forms are the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®, and the college’s own financial aid application. Refer to the table to the right of this page, and be sure to keep track of each college’s application requirements and deadlines. Don’t miss deadlines — missing deadlines can mean missing out on financial aid!

What information do I report on financial aid applications?
Questions on these applications will focus on income and asset information about the parents and student, as well as other details like household size and number of students in the household attending college. You’ll need your federal income tax return and statements showing the current value of your assets to complete your application.

What happens after I apply for financial aid?
The colleges you list on the FAFSA will review your application to determine your eligibility for financial aid. Sometimes the financial aid office needs additional information before they can calculate an award. If a college contacts you to request more information, make sure that you read and respond to all communications in a timely manner. When you’re working through the financial aid process, it helps to stay organized. Keep copies of your tax returns, W2s, and other income documents and bank statements all in one place.

The Financial Aid Timeline:

**September:**
- As you finalize your college list, use the online Net Price Calculator at each school for a customized estimate of your financial aid. Make sure to have some affordable college options on your list.

**October – January:**
- Attend a MEFA College Financing seminar for a detailed explanation of how financial aid works.
- October 1: The FAFSA and the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE® are available. Check to see which applications are required from each college on your list and be sure to submit your application(s) before the deadline. Every college will require at least the FAFSA.

**October – December:**
- Early Action/Early Decision applicants may have early financial aid deadlines. Check with each college’s financial aid office.

**January – May:**
- National deadline to select your college and submit the tuition deposit.

**February – March:**
- Most financial aid applications are due at colleges. Deadlines may be earlier for some colleges, and later for community colleges. Check each college’s deadline to make sure you submit applications on time.

**March – April:**
- Financial aid award letters are sent to accepted students. Read each carefully. Don’t just compare the total amount of the awards — make sure you understand the entire financial aid package. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact the financial aid office at the college.

**Spring:**
- Attend a MEFA Paying the College Bill seminar for help reviewing your financial aid awards. Check mefa.org for details.

**April – May: Apply for financial aid again for your next year of college.

Sign up for emails from MEFA to stay on track throughout this process. Visit mefa.org to sign up!

Connect with MEFA online for useful, timely updates on college planning.