The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

What is the FAFSA?

FAFSA is the application which determines a student's eligibility for federal financial aid, including grants, student loans, and work-study. It also serves as the basis for the awarding of some forms of institutional aid, like need-based scholarships. Every student is encouraged to complete the FAFSA unless you plan to pay cash for college, even if you think you will not qualify for federal assistance.

When will I be able to complete a FAFSA if I plan to enroll in college in fall 2024?

The 2024/25 FAFSA, which determines eligibility for the fall 2024 and spring 2025 semesters, will open sometime in December 2023. The specific opening date has not yet been determined since the federal government is still working to implement significant changes to the application and processing systems. YOU SHOULD NOT COMPLETE A FAFSA APPLICATION UNTIL THE 2024/25 FORM IS RELEASED.

Can my family and I do anything in advance to prepare for the FAFSA?

The electronic FAFSA is accessed and electronically signed with **FSA IDs.** You and your parent(s) will need to establish FSA ID accounts at:

https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/sign-in/landing (click on create account). Although only one parent may need to sign the FAFSA, it is wise to have each parent create an account in case information and electronic signatures are needed from each. Each FSA ID applicant must have a separate email address, so now is the time to create an email account for a parent who currently does not have one.

When should I complete the FSA ID "create an account" process?

You and your parent(s) can apply for FSA IDs at any time, but you MUST have these IDS to access the FAFSA in December 2023. CAUTION: Please ensure that you save the following FSA ID information once you create your account:

- FSA ID User Name
- Email address (and cell phone number if applicable) used when creating accounts
- Password (don't forget it!)
- Back-Up code provided during account creation (in case you forget everything else!)

Are there any special rules for creating an FSA ID account?

Currently only students and parents with Social Security Numbers (SSNs) can obtain an FSA ID, but this process will be updated in August 2023 to allow access to the electronic form and signature functionality for individuals without SSNs. If you or your parents are in this situation, please wait for further instructions from your high school or GRIT advisor before attempting the process.

Please note that only students who are U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens qualify for federal financial aid, but eligible students with undocumented parents are qualified regardless of parental immigration status.

What information will I need to complete the FAFSA in December 2023?

Your permission is required when you begin the FAFSA for the IRS to automatically transfer any federal tax return information it has on file for the **2022 federal tax year** into the FAFSA form.

You will complete the student section of the form, and then your parent(s) will be invited by email to complete their portion. If you or your parents earned income but were not required to file a federal tax return, you will also need documentation of that earned income from 2022.

What happens after I file the FAFSA?

As you complete the FAFSA you may choose up to 20 colleges, universities, or technical schools of interest to receive FAFSA results, which typically are available within 72 hours of FAFSA submission. You must select a post-secondary school on the FAFSA if you are interested in being considered for federal (and often institutional) aid at that school.

FAFSA submission results in a Student Aid Index (SAI), a measurement of your family's financial need for financial assistance with higher education costs each year you are in school. The FAFSA must be filed annually if you will continue in school the following year. Many students may file the FAFSA for multiple years.

In addition to the FAFSA, will schools require any other financial aid forms?

Many private colleges and universities will also ask you to complete the CSS Financial Aid Profile, which is likely to open in October 2023 despite the delayed FAFSA. Please see the CSS Profile worksheet in this guide to help you prepare for this form if needed. Your GRIT advisor can also assist with the CSS Profile or any other financial aid forms which may be required by the post-secondary school you plan to attend. Please note that the FAFSA is the first, not the final step in obtaining financial aid for college.