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Student Bulletin
High School Edition

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FAFSA: Step By Step

What is it? FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The federal government uses this form to determine your eligibility for financial aid, which includes: grants, work-study, scholarships and loans.

Why fill it out? The FAFSA is used to determine how much aid you're eligible for. Think of it this way:

FAFSA → EFC → Financial Need → Financial Aid

EFC stands for **Expected Family Contribution.** Your family must contribute this amount in the coming year to your college costs, according to the government's calculation.

How does it work? Your prospective college will try to meet your financial need through aid made up of funds from federal, state, school and private sources. This may include loans, grants, scholarships and student employment.

FAFSA Process: 1-2-3
The three steps to apply for federal aid:

Step 1: Assemble forms needed to complete FAFSA
You'll need the following to fill out the form:
- Social security number
- Current bank statements
- Driver's license (if any)
- Current mortgage and investment records (if any)
- Alien registration card (if not a U.S. citizen)
- 2005 federal tax return (estimates are OK on tax questions)
- 2005 untaxed income records (if any)
- 2005 W2 forms and other record of money earned
- Parents' 2005 income tax return (if considered dependent)

Step 2: Complete the FAFSA
- Complete FAFSA on the Web: **www.fafsa.ed.gov**.

- In order to maximize your amount of aid, fill out the FAFSA **as soon as possible after January 1.**

- Once finished, print the FAFSA summary (Step 6 online) as well as the "Submission Confirmation" page (or write down your confirmation number and date). If completing the paper version, make a copy for your records.

Step 3: Review your Student Aid Report (SAR)
The SAR is proof that your FAFSA was received. You should receive your electronic SAR in 1-3 days if you signed with your PIN (paper: 2-3 weeks).

What if I find errors on my SAR?
- Report errors immediately to your financial aid office. You can also make corrections online at: **www.fafsa.ed.gov**.

- If you don't receive your SAR in **3-4 weeks**, call **1-800-433-3243 (1-800-4-FED-AID)**.

PIN: Your Key to Online Identification
The Personal Identification Number (PIN) is the code that the U.S. Department of Education uses to identify you online. A PIN allows you to do the following on a FAFSA:
- Check the status   - Make corrections
- Fill out an online renewal form next year
- Electronically sign to speed up the process

To obtain a PIN, eligible students AND parents can visit www.pin.ed.gov (students and parents can each receive their own PINs). Click on "Apply for PIN" near the top of the page. It takes about three days to receive a PIN via e-mail.

Do not reveal your PIN to anyone. The PIN allows anyone to electronically sign federal student aid documents and access your confidential information.

FAFSA Tips
* **Fill out the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1, and each successive year once you're in college:** Early submission maximizes chances of receiving aid.

* **Fill out a "FAFSA on the Web" worksheet:** Click "Before Beginning a FAFSA," then "Print a Pre-Application Worksheet." Use the print-out as a guide before committing answers online. *DO NOT enter online answers directly from the paper FAFSA! Web vs paper FAFSA questions are in a different order!*

* **Sign the application:** If you are filing as a dependent, make sure your parents sign too. You can use your PIN if signing electronically.

* **Save your FAFSA online if you can't finish it in one session:** Click the "Save" button at the bottom of each step to save info for 45 days.

* **Don't leave a field blank.** If a question doesn't apply, enter "0."

Remember that the FAFSA is FREE! If you need help, ask your financial aid office or call the FAFSA Help Desk at: 1-800-4-FED-AID.