What Is FAFSA?

All students are expected to contribute towards the cost of their college education. How much you and your family will be expected to contribute depends on your financial situation—and is what is referred to as your Expected Family Contribution or EFC.

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is the form used by the U.S. Department of Education to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) by conducting a "need analysis" based on financial information, such as income, assets and other household information, which you (and your parents if you are a *dependent student*) will be asked to provide. The form is submitted to, and processed by, a federal processor contracted by the U.S. Department of Education (ED), and the results are electronically transmitted to the financial aid offices of the schools that you list on your application.

FAFSA is the application used by nearly all colleges and universities to determine eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid, including grants, educational loans, and work-study programs.

FAFSA Eligibility

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 aged 18-25);
- 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 in which federal aid was being received.

Applying for Aid...FAFSA is step #1

To be considered for federal financial aid, you must complete and submit a FAFSA. Additionally, most states, colleges and universities use the FAFSA to award other types of institutional financial aid, including state- and college-sponsored financial aid, such as grants, educational loans, and work-study programs.

(Note: In addition to the FAFSA, some states/colleges require additional forms or applications for aid. Check with your school's financial aid office for any state- and/or school-specific requirements.)

FASFA Deadlines

Many states, colleges and universities have filing deadlines that are much earlier—some occurring as early as the first few weeks in January. Additionally, applicants have to pay particular attention to deadline specifics, as some refer to the date by which individual FAFSAs must be *submitted* (Transaction Receipt Date), while others refer to the date by which individual FAFSAs must be *fully processed* (completed by the federal processor and made available to the school financial aid office).

IMPORTANT: We *strongly* encourage *all* students to check with their school's financial aid office to determine their exact FAFSA deadline requirements, and to file their FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1st.

(Note: Student Financial Aid Services maintains a comprehensive database of individual state and school filing deadlines as a convenience to our clients, and offers special assistance to late filers, including those facing impending deadlines. See FAFSA Deadlines for details.)