It's FAFSA time!

Who should apply?

Everyone. FAFSA (**Free Application for Federal Student Aid**) is a one-stop shop for federal, state, and institutional money–including Pell Grants–and it's the only pathway to student loans. Many colleges use the information from the FAFSA forms to calculate how much institutional aid they will grant to a student. In 2017-2018, Pell Grants were as high as $5,920. You may be eligible for some money, even if you don't think you would be and it is free to apply.

How much could you be awarded?

Go to FAFSA*4*caster (https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate) to find out how much you may be eligible for.

To start the actual application process, go to https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa .

When should students apply?

Right now. Money is usually passed out on a first-come/first-served basis, so the sooner you apply, the more money you may be eligible for. The dates for submission for the 2019-2020 school year are October 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021 (For other states, see https://fafsa.gov/deadlines.htm). Schools have different deadlines, and you can usually find these on their web sites.

Why should parents be involved?

Unless you are at least 23 years old, you will need information about your birth or adoptive parents. They may even need information about stepparents. You will create your own FSA ID and FSA ID password, but if parental information is needed, parents will need *their own* FSA IDs and passwords. (If students have no information about their parents, they may still apply.)

Common Errors:

To avoid problems setting up the ID, make sure each ID is associated with a different email address, and check the birthdays and social security numbers. Also, don't use nicknames. The names used should match the names on the social security cards.

What information will they need about parents?

Names (remember–no nicknames!), dates of birth, marital status, etc. For the 2019-2020 form, they will need their 2017 tax information. (This is new. In the past, the previous year was needed, and this often wasn't available at the time of the application.) Now, because the IRS probably already has the parents' tax information, it can be imported right into the form using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT). However, parents should have their 2017 tax returns and W-2s, just in case.

Mark all Options!

Mark all options, four-year, community college, private, etc. when completing FAFSA. If you change your mind, and for example, decide to go to a community college instead of a four-year school, you may not be informed about all financial aid opportunities.