

FINANCIAL AID FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS 2008-2009

- 1. When should I fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) need analysis form?** You should apply as soon as possible after January 1, once your parents have completed their 2007 U.S. income tax return. However, if the college has a deadline earlier than when your parents will have their taxes completed, go ahead and estimate and meet the college's deadline. You can always correct the information later.
- 2. Can my parents and I fill out the FAFSA over the internet?** Yes, in fact it is strongly encouraged that you complete your form in this manner. It is recommended that you and your parents get PIN codes first so you can sign the FAFSA electronically and not have to print out, sign and send in a paper signature page. PIN Site: www.pin.ed.gov FAFSA on the Web Site: www.fafsa.ed.gov
- 3. My parents are separated or divorced. Which parent fills out the FAFSA?** The parent you lived with most during the last 12 months. If you didn't live with either parent, or if you lived with each parent an equal number of days, use the parent who provided most of the support to you in the most recent calendar year.
- 4. Does my stepparent's income and assets have to be reported on the FAFSA?** You should include information on the FAFSA about your family as it is the day you complete the form. If the parent whose information you are reporting on the need analysis form has married or remarried, you must include information about your stepparent (even if they were not married in 2007).
- 5. My parents own a farm. Does this have to be included under assets?** If you and your parents live on the farm and your parents claimed on Schedule F of the U.S. Tax return that they "materially participated in the farm's operation," the farm does not have to be listed under assets.
- 6. My parents have saved for my college education. Aren't they being penalized for their savings?** The need analysis performed is based on the Congressional standard that the family has the primary responsibility for educating their children. Normally, only 2% to 5% of parental savings is expected as Parents' Contribution. Because your family has saved for your education, you probably will not have the greater loan and work burden that students from families without savings will have to assume.
- 7. What if I don't have a Social Security Number (SSN) or don't want to report it on the FAFSA?** You must enter your SSN on question #8 of the FAFSA form. If you don't submit your SSN, the form will be returned unprocessed and you will not be considered for federal student aid.
- 8. Is there any special consideration if I have brothers and sisters continuing their education beyond high school?** Yes. The expected parental contribution is adjusted for families with more than one dependent child attending postsecondary schools.
- 9. My neighbor and I both applied for financial aid at the same school. Why did she get more aid than I did when her parents make more money than mine?** The circumstances in your neighbor's family may be different than they appear. There are other factors such as number in the household, number in college, and assets that affect the computation of the family contribution.
- 10. I don't feel it is the school's right to request my U.S. tax forms. What happens if I don't submit them?** If you fail to comply with a request for U.S. tax forms or any other document requested by the Financial Aid Office, the school will probably discontinue processing your application for aid.

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11. **How do I find out what my family contribution will be?** If you want an early indication of what your family contribution is, look on the Student Aid Report (SAR) you receive back from the federal processor. (You will receive a paper SAR if you do not fill out an e-mail address in question #13. If you fill out an e-mail address, you will receive an e-mail with a link to your electronic SAR.) In the upper right hand corner, the figure following "EFC:" is the expected family contribution for a nine month period. By subtracting the EFC from the cost of education (tuition, books and supplies, room and board, and personal expenses and transportation), you can determine your need. (Note: If you fill out the FAFSA on the Web, the program will give you your "EFC" upon successfully completing this electronic application.)
12. **Do I have to apply for financial aid every year?** Yes. Your financial situation must be reassessed each year. However, the federal government has streamlined the reapplication process by creating a renewal FAFSA on the Web form with much of the previously submitted information already entered. Keep your PIN that the Department of Education will send you as you will need it to access this renewal application on the web.
13. **I was turned down for need-based financial aid last year. Should I reapply?** Yes. The financial circumstances of your family, as well as the cost of attending the institution, may have changed. This is especially true if you will have an additional sister or brother attending college at least half-time.
14. **What do I do when I'm considered dependent and my parents won't provide any information and won't sign the FAFSA? Can someone else sign it?** No one other than your parents may legally sign the FAFSA in this case. Unless they provide the necessary financial information and sign the FAFSA, you cannot be considered for need-based aid. You should contact the financial aid administrator at the college you will attend to explore alternatives.
15. **I never received a paper Student Aid Report or an e-mail with the web link to my electronic SAR. What should I do?** It sometimes takes four weeks for the federal processor to get you a Student Aid Report. If it has been longer than that, call the Federal student aid information number, 1-800-433-3243 or check on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov
16. **When is a student independent?** Under the Federal definition, an independent student is one who meets one of the following conditions: is 24 years old (born before 1/1/1985 for academic year 2008-2009), or is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, or is currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training, or is an orphan (parents deceased) or ward of the court (or was a ward of the court until age 18), or has legal dependents other than a spouse, or is married, or is a graduate or a professional student.
17. **My father (or mother) recently died. How do I complete parental income information?** Complete the FAFSA using the income, tax liability and asset information of the surviving parent only.
18. **Should my parents' retirement funds be included as assets?** No. Retirement plans such as pension funds, annuities, IRAs and Keogh plans should not be included as assets. However, annual contributions are considered untaxed income and are included on Worksheet B, question 85
19. **The FAFSA asks about last year's income. My father (or mother) is now unemployed and our income is significantly less. What should we do?** Go ahead and fill out the need analysis using the 2007 information. However, when you get your SAR back, you need to see or write the Financial Aid Administrator at the school(s) you want to attend. Explain the situation documenting the decrease in income. Financial Aid Administrators might use professional judgment to adjust your need if it is warranted and can be documented sufficiently to meet federal guidelines.