

College-Bound Students Should Apply Now for Financial Aid

Written by Heather Doe
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Des Moines, IA, February 3, 2010 – Now is the time for college-bound students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2010-2011 academic year. The FAFSA is a standardized federal form used to determine eligibility for federal, state, and in some cases, institutional financial aid.

Filing the FAFSA is easier this year with fewer questions to answer and a simplified online process. “We encourage students and parents to complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov because it contains instructions, help features, and built-in edits to reduce applicant error,” explained Karen Misjak, Executive Director of the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid). “It is also processed faster than the paper version, which can be an important factor when meeting financial aid deadlines.”

Iowa College Aid urges all college-bound students to complete the FAFSA regardless of their financial situation. “Most families are eligible for some form of financial aid, but they need to apply early to meet the priority deadlines associated with different programs,” said Misjak. To help Iowa families, Iowa College Aid offers the following FAFSA filing tips.

File the FAFSA no matter your financial situation. Even if you do not think you will qualify for need-based financial aid, you should still file the FAFSA. Many colleges require that you file the FAFSA to be considered for institutional aid. In addition, you are required to complete a FAFSA to be eligible for federal Stafford loans.

Never pay to file the FAFSA. You can file the FAFSA for free at www.fafsa.gov. Reputable resources, such as Iowa College Aid, are available to help you for free.

Meet state and college deadlines. Many states, including Iowa, have a FAFSA filing deadline for state-funded scholarships, grants and work-study opportunities. To be eligible for Iowa-funded financial aid your FAFSA must be completed and received at the federal processing center prior to July 1, 2010. You also need to complete the Iowa Financial Aid Application, which can be accessed through the statewide community web portal,

www.IHaveaPlanIowa.gov. Keep in mind, most colleges and universities have earlier financial aid deadlines. Students should check with their college of choice to determine its priority deadline for financial aid and if additional documentation is required.

Double check information to avoid delays. Review your FAFSA information before you submit it for processing. Make sure the student’s Social Security number and the parent’s Social Security number are typed in the correct spaces. Mix-ups like these will cause processing delays.

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Electronically sign your FAFSA. The electronic application is not complete until both the student and parent electronically sign the FAFSA using their Federal Student Aid Personal Identification Numbers (PIN). You can apply for student and parent PINs while completing the FAFSA online, or you can go to the Federal Student Aid PIN website at www.pin.ed.gov .

Students and families who have questions about applying for financial aid, or are interested in learning more about the resources available through the statewide community web portal, can contact Iowa College Aid's Information Service Center at 877-272-4456. In addition, more information to help Iowa families plan, prepare and pay for college is available on Iowa College Aid's website at www.iowaCollegeAid.gov .

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