Filing the FAFSA 2024-2025



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Who Should File the FAFSA

- Undergraduate and graduate students should file the FAFSA to apply for financial aid from the federal and state governments and most colleges
 - File the FAFSA starting October 1 in December 31 of the senior year in high school and annually thereafter
- The FAFSA should be filed by U.S. citizens, permanent residents and eligible non-citizens
 - If a student's parents are undocumented or foreign citizens, they will be able to create an FSA ID

What's New in the 2024-2025 FAFSA?

- The 2024-2025 FAFSA filing season starts on December 31, 2023 and will return to an October 1 start date in subsequent years
- The 2024-2025 FAFSA is based on 2022 federal income tax returns, using income and tax information from the prior-prior year instead of the prior year
- The IRS Direct Data Exchange (DDX) will transfer income and tax information from the IRS to the FAFSA
 - For privacy and security reasons, these data elements will not be visible
- The myStudentAid mobile app has been retired

Which Year's Information is Reported?

Assets

 Assets are reported as of the date the FAFSA is filed

Income

- Income and tax information are based on the second previous tax year (the prior-prior year)
- Example: The 2024-25 FAFSA is based on income and tax information from 2022
 - Do not substitute 2023 income and tax information for 2022 income and tax information
 - If the family income has changed, file an appeal with the college financial aid office

FAFSA Simplification Starts in 2024-2025

- The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 included legislation to simplify the FAFSA
- The number of questions has been cut by about twothirds
 - For example, questions concerning Selective Service registration, drug convictions and interest in work-study have been removed
- The new form is better aligned with the federal income tax return, allowing more questions to be transferred from the IRS
- Students can list up to 20 colleges at a time

Student Aid Index vs. EFC

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) will be renamed the Student Aid Index (SAI)

Financial Need = COA - SAI

Unlike the EFC, which can be as low as \$0, the minimum Student Aid Index will be -\$1,500.

Key Changes in the 2024-2025 FAFSA

- Financial aid eligibility for single parents will *increase*
- Financial aid eligibility for middle- and high-income families will decrease
 - The number of children in college at the same time will no longer affect eligibility for financial aid
 - The small business exclusion and the exclusion for family farms will be eliminated
- New rules for divorced or separated parents base custodial parent on who provides more financial support instead of where the student lived
- Cash support will no longer be reported as untaxed income on the FAFSA
- Child support received will be reported as an asset, not income
- New Federal Pell Grant eligibility formula

Other Changes to the 2024-2025 FAFSA

- Financial aid administrators will no longer be able to zero out room and board for students who live at home with their parents.
- Financial aid administrators will no longer be able to have a policy of denying all financial aid appeals.
- Dependency overrides will be assumed to continue for the duration of the student's entire college enrollment, absent of any conflicting information.
- Paid FAFSA preparation will no longer be permitted
- The income threshold for ignoring assets is now \$60,000
- The asset protection allowance has largely disappeared

Student Gender and Race/Ethnicity

- Students should answer the question about their gender based on their gender at birth, even if it has subsequently changed
 - Gender at birth is listed on the student's birth certificate
- Gender at birth was previously used to trigger the Selective Service requirements
 - If a student was born male, the student must register with Selective Service between ages 18 and 25 (inclusive)
 - Selective Service registration is no longer required for the student to be eligible for federal student aid, but may be required for state student financial aid
- Gender, race and ethnicity do not affect aid eligibility and are not shared with the colleges

Order of Colleges on the FAFSA

- The U.S. Department of Education no longer shares the list of colleges on the FAFSA with the colleges
- The list of colleges is still shared with state grant agencies, so list an in-state public college first to be considered for state grants
- Then list the colleges with the earliest financial aid deadlines, regardless of whether they are in-state or out-of-state
- Up to 20 colleges can be listed on the FAFSA at a time
- To list more than 20 colleges, wait until the FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) arrives, then login to FAFSA on the Web with the student or parent's FSA ID to delete the colleges and add new colleges
- When looking for a college's Federal School Code, be careful about colleges with the same name in different states

Legal Parents

- Legal parents include biological or adoptive parents
 - Including same-sex parents
 - Including unmarried parents living together
- Legal parents also include a parent who is listed as a parent on the student's birth certificate
- A stepparent is considered to be a parent only if he or she is married to the student's custodial parent as of the date the FAFSA is filed or has legally adopted the student

Marital Status on the FAFSA

- Marital status must be reported as of the date the form is filed
- Do not confuse the question about the student's marital status with the one about the parent's marital status
- Same-sex marriage (but not civil unions and domestic partnerships) is considered married on the FAFSA
- Marriage to a foreign national is treated as married, even if the spouse is not a U.S. citizen or undocumented, does not live in the U.S. or the marriage occurred outside the U.S.
- Legal parents who are unmarried, divorced or separated but living together are treated as though they are married
 - It is unclear if a separation can still include an informal separation, not just a legal separation, but probably not

Divorced/Separated Parents

- If the student's parents are divorced or separated (but not living together), only one parent must complete the FAFSA.
- This parent is the parent who provided the most financial support to the student during the 12 months ending on the date the FAFSA is submitted
- Questions about parent marital status refer to the custodial parent's current marital status
- If this parent has remarried, the stepparent's income and assets must be reported on the FAFSA, even if the custodial parent got married after the end of the base (tax) year and even if there is a prenuptial agreement
- If the custodial parent has died, the stepparent is no longer considered the student's parent, even if the student is still living with the stepparent, unless the stepparent has legally adopted the student

Parent Marital Status on the FAFSA

Parent Marital Status	FAFSA Marital Status If the Parents Live Together	FAFSA Marital Status If the Parents Do Not Live Together
Divorced	Unmarried and both parents live together	Divorced or separated
Legal Separation	Unmarried and both parents live together	Divorced or separated
Informal Separation	Married or remarried	Divorced or separated
Never Married (Single)	Unmarried and both parents live together	Never married
Married or Remarried	Married or remarried	Married or remarried

Changes in Marital Status

- Report marital status as of the date the FAFSA is submitted
 - Do not anticipate a future change in marital status
 - A couple who is engaged to be married is not considered to be married
 - Do not report marital status as of the end of the base year if it has changed since then
- The FAFSA cannot be updated to reflect a mid-year change in the *student's* marital status except in rare circumstances
- A college financial aid administrator may require the student to update his or her marital status "to address an inequity or to more accurately reflect the applicant's ability to pay"
 - Examples include changes in marital status due to death of a spouse, divorce or separation due to domestic violence or an incarcerated or incapacitated spouse

Reporting of Alimony on the FAFSA

- The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 changed the tax reporting of alimony paid and received effective starting in 2019 for new or modified divorces
 - Alimony paid is no longer deducted from the payer's adjusted gross income (AGI)
 - Alimony received is no longer included in the recipient's AGI
 - Alimony received is not reported as untaxed income on the FAFSA
- This change means that the recipient of alimony payments will have lower AGI on the FAFSA, while the payer will have higher AGI

Parent's Education Level

- The purpose of this question is to identify students who are first in their family to go to college
- The answer should be based on the student's biological or adoptive parents, not legal guardians, stepparents or foster parents
- Since each state or college may have a different definition of a first-generation college student, this screening question uses the most general definition
- Specify whether either parent attended college, even if they did not get a degree

Dependent or Independent Student Status

- Dependent students are required to report parent information on the FAFSA
- Students who answer "yes" to any of the dependency status questions are considered to be independent, otherwise they are dependent
- A student is considered to be dependent even if
 - The student is financially self-sufficient
 - The student does not live with his or her parents
 - The student is not claimed as an exemption on the parent's federal income tax returns
 - The parents refuse to complete the FAFSA, participate in verification, pay for college or live in a foreign country

Criteria for Independent Student Status

- Age 24 as of December 31 of the award year
- Married
- Graduate or professional school student
- Active duty member of the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training
- Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces
- Has children who receive more than half their support from the student
- Has other dependents who live with the student and receive more than half support from the student
- After reaching age 13 was an orphan, in foster care or a ward of the court
- Court-ordered emancipated minor prior to reaching the age of majority
- Court-ordered legal guardianship
- Unaccompanied youth who is homeless or self-supporting and at risk of homelessness
- College FAAs can grant a dependency override in unusual circumstances

Household Size

- Household size will be based on the number of family members listed on the federal income tax return
- The student should always be included in household size, even if the student does not or will not live with his or her parents
- To be counted in family size, children must live with the parent for more than half the year and must not provide more than half of their own support
- The student/parents will be able to update the number of children and dependents on the FAFSA
- Child support paid is reported on the FAFSA if, and only if, the child is not counted in household size (i.e., the parent provides < half-support)

Number in College

- Although the FAFSA continues to have a question about the number of children in college, the answer no longer has any impact on eligibility for need-based financial aid
- The parent contribution portion of the Student Aid Index (SAI) is no longer divided by the number in college
- The number in college no longer affects the parent income protection allowance

IRS Direct Data Exchange (DDX)

- The IRS Direct Data Exchange transfers income and tax information from prior prior federal income tax returns into the FAFSA
- This simplifies the FAFSA and reduces the likelihood that the FAFSA will be selected for verification, saving time and hassle
- Most families will have filed federal income tax returns before the start date for the FAFSA
- If you can't use the IRS Direct Data Exchange, get an IRS Tax Return Transcript ASAP
- The IRS doesn't have asset information

Who can't use the IRS DDX?

- Address on FAFSA (FSA ID) does not match address on federal income tax return
- Tax return filed too recently (< 3 weeks electronic, < 11 weeks paper)
- Change in marital status since the end of the tax year
- Married taxpayers who file as Head of Household or Married Filing Separately
- Parents who file the FAFSA as "Unmarried and both legal parents living together"
- Taxpayer filed an amended income tax return
- Taxpayers who file a Puerto Rican or foreign income tax return instead of or in addition to a federal income tax return
- Parents who do not have a Social Security Number
- Victims of tax identity theft until the problem is resolved

IRS Tax Return Transcript

Order your free IRS Tax Return Transcript at www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript

- If you can't use the IRS Direct Data Exchange, you may be required to provide an IRS Tax *Return* Transcript if selected for verification
- The online transcript is preferred because the taxpayer can email it to the college, but it requires more information for security reasons
 - A credit card account number or the account number from a loan
 - A mobile phone number registered to you
- Otherwise, file IRS Form 4506-T by mail
- Tax transcripts are mailed only to the address on the tax return
 - The IRS will no longer send transcripts by fax or to third party addresses
 - If the taxpayer has moved, file IRS Form 8822 to change the taxpayer's address, then wait a few weeks to request a tax transcript

Assets

- Report the net worth of the asset, which is the current market value minus any debt that is secured by the asset
 - Unsecured debt does not reduce the net worth, even if it was used to buy the asset
 - The debt must be secured by the asset, not some other asset, to reduce its net worth
- Qualified retirement plans and the family's principal place of residence are not reported as investments on the FAFSA
- Cash must be reported as an asset, even if the family intends to use it for a future expense
- Rental properties are usually reported as investments, not businesses

Reporting of 529 College Savings Plans

- Assets are usually reported based on who owns the asset, as opposed to the beneficiary, with a few exceptions
- Custodial 529 plans (owned by a child) and 529 plans owned by the FAFSA parent(s) are reported as parent *investments* on the FAFSA, but *qualified distributions* are ignored
 - Parent assets have a small impact on aid eligibility, reducing eligibility for need-based aid by at most 5.64% of the plan's asset value (e.g., \$564 per \$10,000)
 - A sibling's 529 plan is no longer reported as an asset on the FAFSA, even if owned by the parent
- All other 529 plans (e.g., owned by a grandparent, aunt, uncle or non-custodial parent) are not reported as assets on the FAFSA, and qualified distributions are no longer reported as income to the student on a subsequent year's FAFSA
- Non-qualified distributions continue to be included in adjusted gross income (AGI)

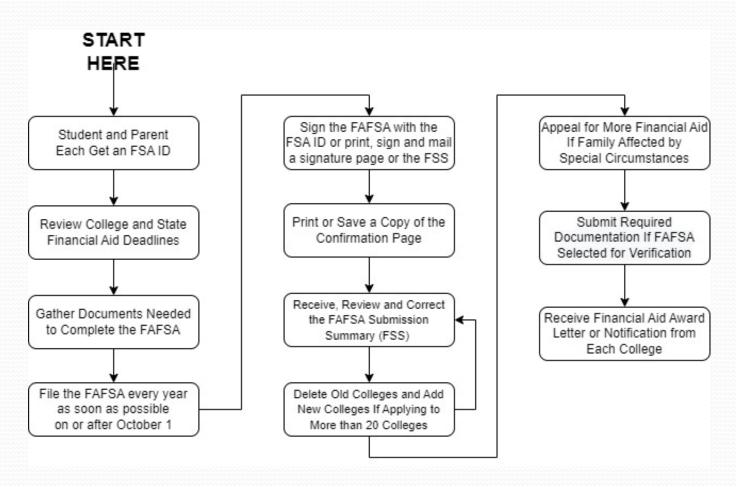
Business Assets

- Business assets that are owned or deeded to the business are reported as part of the business value
- Small businesses are now reported on the FAFSA
- Rental properties are usually reported as investments, not businesses
 - To be reported as a business, the real estate must be owned by a formally recognized business and provide additional services
 - A hotel is a business, while a time share or vacation home is an investment

Appendix

Additional Information

Summary of the Financial Aid Process





FAFSA V Loans & Grants ~ Repayment ~

Loan Forgiveness V



Log In | Create Account

Get Money to Pay for School

Use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form to apply for financial aid for college or graduate school.

2024-25 FAFSA Form

Start a New Form

Edit Existing Form

Need to access last year's form? Start or Edit a 2023-24 Form



Visit FAFSA.gov (which redirects to a page on StudentAid.gov) to complete the FAFSA

The FAFSA is a free form. Beware of copycat sites that are not the official FAFSA website.

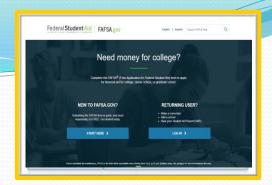
Applicants Exempt from Asset Reporting

- The Simplified Needs Test is now known as Applicants Exempt from Asset Reporting
- Assets are disregarded if any of the following criteria are true
 - The applicant qualifies for the maximum Federal Pell Grant
 - The applicant's parents AGI is less than \$60,000 and they do not file Schedule A, B, C (if greater than +/- \$10,000), D, E, F and H
 - The applicant or the applicant's parent received a meanstested federal benefit in 2022 or 2023 (e.g., Medicaid, SSI, SNAP, TANF, WIC, Free and Reduced Price School Lunch, EITC, Federal Housing Assistance, QHP)

Gather Key Documents

- Before starting the FAFSA on the Web (FOTW), gather
 - Student driver's license
 - Student Alien Registration Card, if applicable
 - Student and Parent
 - Social Security cards
 - 2022 W-2 and 1099 Forms and records of money earned and other taxable benefits
 - 2022 federal income tax form (even if not yet completed)
 - Records of untaxed income
 - Current bank statements
 - Business, farm, and other real estate records
 - Records of stocks, bonds, and other investments
- Complete 2024-2025 FOTW Worksheet (optional)
- Create a file for copies of all financial aid documents submitted





Application Checklist

- Gather necessary documents ahead of time
- The student and parent should each get and use their own FSA ID at studentaid.gov
- Complete a FAFSA on the Web available at fafsa.gov
- Allow ample time to complete the online FOTW application for submission by the deadline
- Check the FAFSA on the Web for accuracy prior to submission
- Sign the application using student's and one custodial parent's FSA IDs
- Print and keep a copy of the FAFSA before submitting data
- Print and keep a copy of the submission Confirmation Page and the FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)

Information Required on the FAFSA

- Student Personal Circumstances
- Student Demographics
- Student Financials
- Colleges
- Student Signature Page
- Parent Demographics
- Parent Financials
- Parent Signature Page



Why Does the FAFSA Ask ...?

- The question about current and former foster youth is not only used to determine independent student status, but also to send the student information about additional financial aid resources available to them
- The purpose of the questions about high school information is to help high schools track how many students have filed a FAFSA
- The purpose of the parent education level question is to identify students who are first in their family to go to college
- The purpose of the grade level question is to determine applicable annual loan limits

Common FAFSA Errors

- Do not confuse child support paid with child support received
- Child support received outside of a legal child support agreement should be reported as untaxed income to the parent
- Foster care and adoption assistance payments are not reported on the FAFSA
- Involuntary pension and retirement plan contributions, such as to state public employee retirement systems, are not reported on the FAFSA; voluntary contributions are reported
- Don't confuse Supplemental Security Income (SSI) with Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), despite the similar acronyms
- Don't confuse the Earned Income Tax Credit with income earned from work, even though both terms mention "earned income"
- Do not include cents when reporting dollar amounts

Common Tax-Related FAFSA Errors

- Head of household tax filing status is prone to error and may trigger verification
- Questions about U.S. income tax paid must report specific line numbers from federal income tax returns, not amount withheld, estimated tax payments, total payments or remaining tax liability
- Only the taxable portion of a scholarship should be reported on the FAFSA
- A tax-free return of contributions from a Roth IRA is reported as untaxed income on the FAFSA



- Appeal for more aid if the family is affected by special circumstances
- Provide documentation of the special circumstances and their financial impact
- Adjustments are more likely if the circumstances were beyond the family's control
- Families can appeal for more aid at any time, even in the middle of the academic year
- A free tip sheet about how to appeal for more financial aid is available at kantrowitz.com/books/appeal/



Special Circumstances

- Private K-12 tuition
- Unreimbursed medical and dental expenses
- Unusually high dependent care costs
- Job loss or other change in student or parent income
- Number of parents genuinely enrolled in college at least half-time
- Homelessness
- Income from an involuntary foreclosure or bankruptcy liquidation
- Disability-related expenses
- End of child support or Social Security benefits
- Income from a Roth IRA conversion
- Hardship distributions from retirement plans
- Natural disasters (wildfires, wind storms, floods, mudslides, tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, or COVID-19 pandemic)
- Volatile income that varies from one year to the next, especially if self-employed
- One-time events that are not reflective of ability to pay during the award year

FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)

- FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) is the new name for the Student Aid Report (SAR)
- After the student completes the FAFSA on the Web, a FSS will be sent to the student
 - A link to an electronic FSS will be sent if student provides an e-mail address
 - A paper FSS will be mailed if no student e-mail address is provided
 - Student should contact FAFSA processor at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) if FSS not received within two weeks
- An electronic copy of the data will be sent to each college or university listed by the student on the FAFSA
- Keep a copy of the FSS with other financial aid documents

FAFSA

Submission Summary

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Federal Student Aid

FFICE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Use this form to review and correct information on your 2024–25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form. Or correct your FAFSA information online at fafsa.gov.

Student Aid (FAFSA®) form. Or correct your FAFSA information online at <u>fafsa.gov</u>.

April 15, 2024 000001C001 F 2

 John Smith
 Data Release Number (DRN): 9755

 742 Evergreen Terrace
 Student Aid Index (SAI): 000000°C

 Springfleid, OH 55555
 Student Aid Index (SAI): 000000°C

Dear John Smith,

Your FAFSA Submission Summary shows the information you submitted on your 2024–25 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, which was received on 04/01/2024 and processed on 04/15/2024. You can use this summary to check your application status and student aid eligibility (page 1); determine if you need to resolve any problems with your application (page 2); examine your federal student loan history (page 3); and review or correct the information you provided in your FAFSA form (pages 5-18). See correction instructions on page 4 and mailing instructions on page 18.

Application Status

Review the checked boxes.

☑ Your FAFSA appears to be complete. Review the data on pages 5–18 of your FAFSA Submission Summary and make corrections or updates if necessary. Any schools listed on your FAFSA will receive your information.

Your FAFSA has been selected for verification. Verification is a process where your school confirms the data you reported on your FAFSA. Your school has the authority to contact you for documentation that supports income and other information that you reported on your FAFSA.

Federal Student Aid Eligibility

Colleges use your Student Aid Index (SAI) to determine how much financial aid you would receive if you attended their school. Financial aid may include grants (free funds that do not have to be repaid), work-study (paid part-time employment), and/or lowinterest loans (borrowed funds that must be repaid). Your SAI is subject to change if you update or correct your FAFs.

Your financial aid package could also include other federal, state, or institutional aid. Your school's financial aid office will tell you the specific types and amounts of aid you can receive. For more information about the SAI and the types and sources of aid, go to Sudenthid, gov.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers tax benefits to help you maximize your college savings or recover some of the money you spend on tuition or loan interest. For more information, visit StudentAid.gov/resources/tax-benefits.

Review the checked hoxes

☑ Based on your SAI, it appears that you may be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant of up to \$7,395 if you are enrolled full-time. Additional Pell Grant funds may be available if you are continuously enrolled (i.e., attending summer term). Your grant may be adjusted if you meet or exceed the lifetime limit established for the Federal Pell Grant program.

We sent your information to other federal agencies to verify your eligibility for federal student aid and there appears to be an issue with the information provided on your application. Review the checklist on page 2 for instructions on how to resolve these issues.

R5E000001 999



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Reminders

- Assets are reported as of the date the FAFSA is filed, not the last day of the tax year
- If a dollar amount is greater than the size of the field, enter all 9s
- Financial aid does not transfer from the student's previous college to the new college, so a transfer student must add the new college to their FAFSA
- The parent education level question determines whether the student is a first-generation college student
- If you do not sign the FAFSA with an FSA ID, you will need to submit a paper/PDF version of the FAFSA. This can add weeks of delays to the process.
- Applicants should print and retain a copy of the Confirmation Page, as it provides proof of the date and time the FAFSA was filed and shows the student's Student Aid Index (SAI)

Federal and State Verification

- Some students may be required to verify the information reported on the FAFSA
- If selected for verification, the tax information of federal tax filers will be verified through
 - IRS Tax return transcripts if requested by the college or university
- Non-tax filers selected for verification may be asked to provide
 - Signed statements confirming that they did not file a 2022 federal tax return and were not required by IRS to do so
 - Copies of W-2s, 1099s or other income documentation from each employer, if any income was earned from work
- All selected aid applicants and contributors may also be asked to verify certain demographic data listed such as
 - Household size and number in college
 - Enrollment History for transfer students
 - Identity Confirmation

IRS Tax Schedules

- A: Itemized deductions
- B: Interest and dividends
- C: Business income or loss (if exceeds +/- \$10,000)
- D: Capital gains and losses
- E: Income from rental properties, royalties, partnerships, S corporations, estates, and trusts
- F: Farm income and expenses
- H: Household employment taxes

Differences between the FAFSA and CSS Profile

- CSS Profile counts the net worth of the family home, but may cap it at 2-4 times income
- CSS Profile does not have exemptions from asset reporting
- CSS Profile has a minimum student contribution or summer work expectation
- Paper losses are ignored on the CSS Profile
- CSS Profile counts non-custodial parent income and assets
- CSS Profile counts sibling assets when the sibling is under age 19 and not enrolled in college

- CSS Profile reduces the parent contribution when there are two or more children in college
 - 2 children: 60%
 - 3 children: 45%
 - 4 children: 35%
- CSS Profile has allowances for college savings and an emergency reserve
- CSS Profile has adjustments for differences in the regional cost of living
- CSS Profile assesses student assets at a 25% rate instead of the FAFSA's 20% rate

Free Help and Key Telephone Numbers

- Federal Student Aid Information Center
 - For help with the FAFSA, FSA ID and federal student aid
 - 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or 1-334-523-2691
 - Email StudentAidHelp@ed.gov
 - studentaid.gov/completefafsa studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out
- College Goal Sunday (formyourfuture.org)
- Social Security Administration (SSA) ssa.gov 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778)
- Selective Service System (SSS) sss.gov
 1-888-655-1825 or 1-847-688-6888
- IRS Get a Tax Return Transcript 1-800-908-9946
- CSS Profile cssprofile.collegeboard.org 1-844-202-0524



How to Keep Your Financial Aid

- File the FAFSA every year
- Grants and other types of financial aid need to be "earned" by getting good grades
- To retain eligibility, you must be maintaining satisfactory academic progress:
 - Maintain at least a 2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale
 - Pass enough classes to graduate within 150 percent of the normal time-frame for the degree
 - Maintain at least half-time enrollment for federal student loans

Thank You

Follow Mark Kantrowitz on Twitter at @mkant Read policy research at www.studentaidpolicy.com