

## What is Financial Aid?

Financial aid is money that helps pay for college. Merit-based aid is money given to students with special talents, skills, or abilities, while need-based aid is available to those students who demonstrate financial need.

## What Kinds of Financial Aid are Available?

Grants and scholarships are gifts that do not have to be paid back. Grants are usually given because the student has financial need, while scholarships are usually given to recognize the student's academic achievement, athletic ability or other talent. Loans must be repaid, usually with interest, after the student graduates or stops going to school. Employment, usually called work-study, allows the student to work and earn money to help pay for school. These jobs are usually on-campus.

## Who Should Apply for Need-Based Financial Aid?

All students should apply for need-based financial aid. Many families mistakenly think they may not qualify for this type of aid based on their income and assets. However, if students choose not to apply for need-based financial aid, they may be closing the door on opportunities that could help pay for college. There are other sources of financial assistance available regardless of need, but most require that the student file the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) first.

## How Can I Forecast Our Need for Financial Aid?

If you wish to begin exploring your financial aid options and get an early start on the financial aid process, [FAFSA4caster](#) is for you! By using FAFSA4caster, you and your family will receive an early estimate of eligibility for federal student aid. This website helps you become familiar with the various types of aid that are available and investigate other sources of aid, such as grants & scholarships. The website is: [www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov) and it appears in English & Spanish.

## How Does A Student Apply For Need-Based Financial Aid?

The [FAFSA](#) is the form used to apply for need-based financial aid. The student must complete the [FAFSA](#) to apply for Maryland's need-based grants, as well as for federal financial aid and other aid from colleges. The FAFSA should be submitted no later than March 1 to be considered for need-based aid from the State of Maryland, and students must apply every year. Check out the [FAFSA4caster](#), a tool to help you plan and estimate your share of college costs.

The US Department of Education supplies and processes the FAFSA. The processed information is then sent to the Office of Student Financial Assistance and to all the colleges listed on the form. Once your FAFSA is processed, you will receive your:

- **Student Aid Report (SAR):** This notifies you that your FAFSA has been processed. Your EFC also appears on the SAR.
- **Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** Amount students and their family are expected to contribute financially toward cost of attendance

To assist in understanding the FAFSA process, visit the website, [FastWEB.com](http://FastWEB.com). Once you have registered, read the document "FAFSA: Step by Step," including an introduction to the Student Aid Report (SAR).

### **[Understanding your Financial Aid Award Letter & Alternative Loan Guide](#)**

from FastWEB (Feb/Mar 2007 edition)

Many colleges may require that the student complete one or more supplemental application forms, such as the [CSS Profile](#), to apply for institutional financial aid. Ask the colleges for information about any additional applications they may require.

Students are encouraged to complete the [FAFSA online](#) from a home computer or from a computer at the high school or college and submit the application online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Be sure to apply for a PIN number for both the student and the parent in order to "sign" the electronic application. Paper FAFSA applications are available in the Career Center, but take 3-5 weeks to process. The online FAFSA is processed within one week.

For additional information from the U.S. Department of Education regarding financial aid consult:

[The Student Guide](#). This comprehensive resource on student financial aid offers detailed information on the types of financial aid available. Grants, loans, and work-study are the three major forms of need-based aid available through the Department's Federal Student Aid office. Updated each award year, The Student Guide describes the various programs and how to apply for them and is available in both English and Spanish.

[Funding Your Education](#), an introductory publication for students not yet enrolled in a postsecondary school, provides general information in English or Spanish about the U.S. Department of Education's federal student financial aid programs. Copies of this book are available in the Career Center.

[Selective Service Registration](#) - If you are male and will be 18 within 30 days, you must register with the Selective Service. Failure to register or otherwise comply with the Military Selective Service Act is, upon conviction, punishable by a fine of up to \$250,000, imprisonment for up to five years, or both. In addition, Federal and certain State laws require registration as a prerequisite for obtaining student financial aid, job training, government employment, and U.S. naturalization.

## **Financial Aid From the State of Maryland**

Each year, the State of Maryland awards more than \$48 million in financial aid to over 35,000 Maryland residents. Maryland students use this aid at community colleges, private colleges and universities, private career schools, and the state's 13 public four-year campuses. Students can download applications for [Maryland State Scholarships and Assistance Programs](#), including the Guaranteed Assistance Grant and the Educational Assistance Grant, or conduct a personalized [Search for Maryland scholarships](#), click on "online scholarship search."

### **[www.MDgo4it.org](http://www.MDgo4it.org)**

The Maryland Higher Education Commission offers [Questions About College?](#) , a good source for information about applying to college and financial assistance.

Go to

<http://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/QuestionsaboutCollege/QuestionsaboutCollege.asp>

**[The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid](#)** Go to <http://www.finaid.org/>

## **Financial Aid for Non-Citizens**

[HispanicScholarship.com](http://HispanicScholarship.com)

[Careers&Colleges.com](http://Careers&Colleges.com)

[College Sense](#)

[FinAid - The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid](#)

Scholarships for Latino Students <http://www.latinocollegedollars.org/>