

# U.S. Department of Education Student Financial Assistance

Students interested in applying for financial assistance available through the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) must complete their application process as soon as possible to ensure eligibility for these funds and to ensure that your educational goals can be met without interruption. The most common sources of federal aid are made available to students through the Federal Pell Grant Program and the Federal Direct Student Loan Program.

Federal Pell Grants are available to low income families and do not have to be repaid. Effective with the 2015-2016 award year, these grants provide up to \$5,775 of free financial assistance for each academic year of education. Federal Stafford Loans are also available to most students and can provide approximately \$9,500 per academic year for independent students or \$5,500 per academic year for dependent students. The USDE may subsidize a portion of these loan amounts for low income families resulting in the family incurring no interest on these loans while the student is completing his/her education. Unsubsidized Stafford Loans are generally available to any student regardless of income or credit history. These student loans are not free money and must be repaid. Repayment of your student loans generally begins in the 7<sup>th</sup> month after you complete your training or withdraw from the program.

Applying for federal financial aid is an easy, web-based process. You can apply for and monitor your financial aid process at [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov). This USDE web site is a student's home page for his/her federal aid application process. There are only two documents that you need to complete via this web site to begin your financial aid process:

- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

This application must be completed by you (and your spouse, if married OR your parents, if you do not meet the USDE definition of an "independent" student as determined during the application process). It is extremely important any income reported on the FAFSA is imported using the "IRS Data Retrieval" process available to you as you complete your FAFSA online. This will ensure accurate data and will reduce the possibility that you will need to obtain proof of your tax information from the IRS which will significantly delay your federal aid. When you complete the application, you should include the school's 6-digit code number so the institution receives the results of your application.

- **Electronic Master Promissory Note (E-MPN)**

If you are applying for student loans, you must complete an electronic master promissory note (E-MPN). You must also include the school's 6-digit code number on this document.

Both of the above documents require your electronic signature for authorization. Your USDE issued FSA (Federal Student Aid) ID (formerly your PIN) is used as your electronic signature. If you do not have a FSA ID or PIN, you may also register for one to be issued through the USDE web site.

Before the institution may disburse any loan proceeds on your behalf you may also have to complete a process called "**Entrance Counseling**". This is required by all first-time borrowers and can also be completed by you electronically through the [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) web site. This counseling should be taken very seriously as it explains your rights and responsibilities regarding your student loans. We encourage you to review your responsibilities regarding your federal student loan multiple times. The programs in which you enroll, and whether or not you complete your program, have significant effects on your eligibility and on your loan repayment obligations.

Financial aid administrators are available at the school for any questions you may have about your financial aid process. Please complete the requirements described in this letter as soon as possible and congratulations on your decision to further your education.

## **Awarding Federal Student Aid**

After completing the FAFSA, E-MPN, and counseling requirement (if required) your file will be reviewed by our financial aid administrators to determine your eligibility for federal student aid. In order to begin receiving aid, and to continue receiving future disbursements, you must be making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with the institution's policy. You may also be required to provide additional information to confirm your eligibility in accordance with the results of your FAFSA application. When your financial aid file is complete, your financial need will be determined and a financial aid package will be offered to you. Your Award Notification letter will include all information regarding your financial aid package.

Your financial need is generally determined by examining an estimate of your cost of attendance for the academic year against your family's expected financial contribution and any other types of educational financial assistance you may be receiving for that school year. If you have a complete file containing no conflicting information, you meet all other eligibility requirements, and are determined to have financial need you will be eligible to receive federal student financial assistance.

Federal grants and subsidized student loans (to the extent the student is eligible) will be awarded before any unsubsidized awards. This provides the most financial benefit to the student and the student's family. Your eligible federal aid for the school year will be divided into two equal payments. Half of your federal aid will be disbursed for the first half of the academic year and the second half is eligible to be disbursed when you successfully complete the midpoint of the academic year. These periods of time may be shorter for periods of enrollment less than a full academic year, i.e. programs less than 900 clock hours and 26 weeks in length or remaining portions of longer programs in which the remaining portion of the program is less than 900 hours. Always contact the financial aid office with any questions you have regarding your financial aid.

You will be notified whenever any of your federal aid has been disbursed. In accordance with applicable statutes and regulations, federal aid will be credited to your account with the institution and will be applied to existing tuition and fee charges for the current year, as well as to any other educational charges (i.e., textbooks, supplies, and equipment) for which you have authorized the institution to use your federal aid. In event federal aid disbursements exceed the balance of any charges owed to the institution for that period, you may receive the excess credit balance and use those funds for non-institutional costs of attendance.

The institution will make every effort to disburse your federal aid on a timely basis, however, a review of your academic and financial aid files must be done prior to disbursing any aid to confirm that you are maintaining satisfactory progress and that you remain eligible for your federal student aid. Failure to complete your program of study can also have adverse impacts on your federal aid. You are advised to review the institution's policies regarding Satisfactory Academic Progress, Withdrawals, and Return of Unearned Aid for more detailed information about how these policies affect your federal aid eligibility.

Financial aid administrators are available to answer any questions you may have about your financial aid eligibility, awards, and disbursements.